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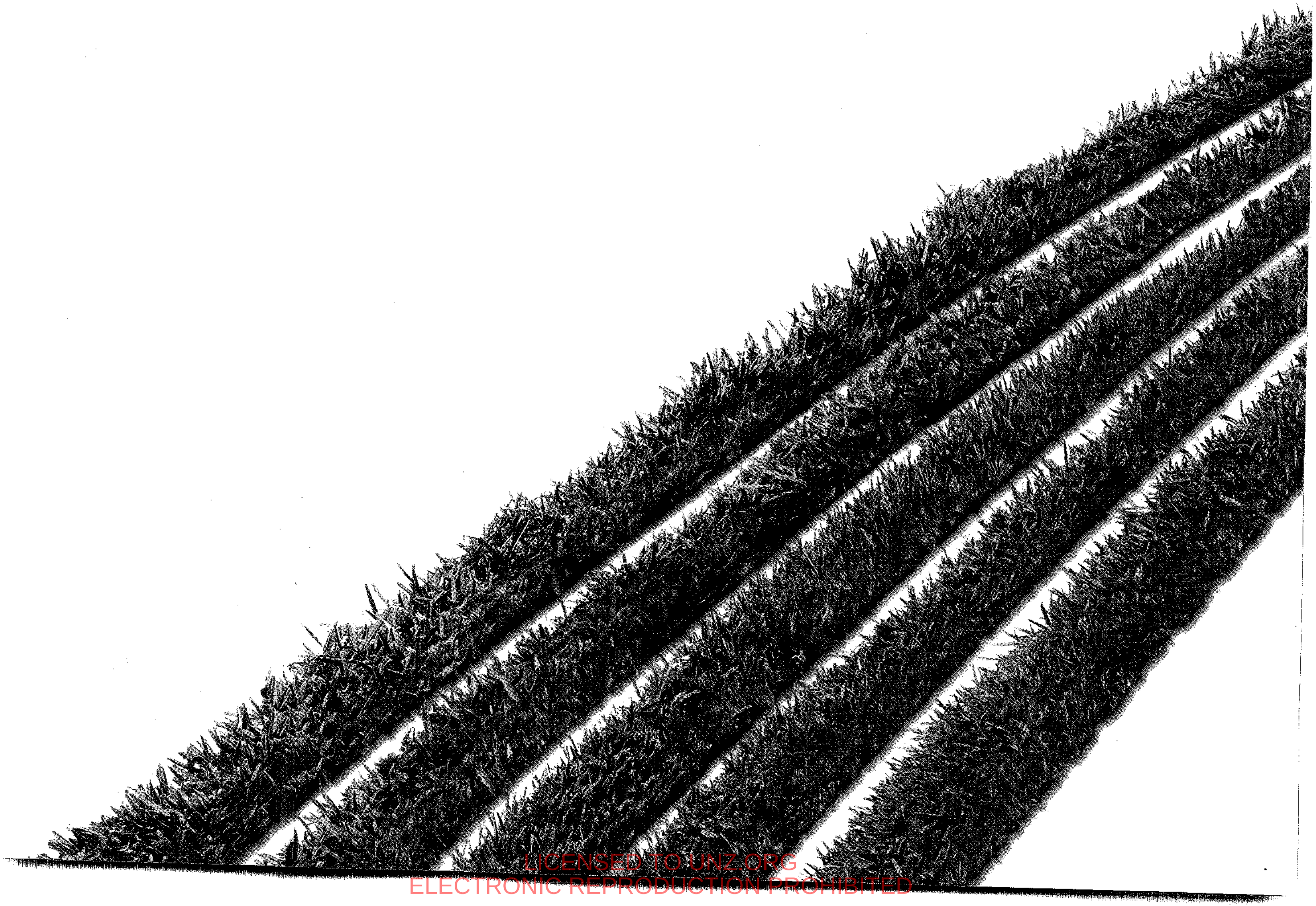

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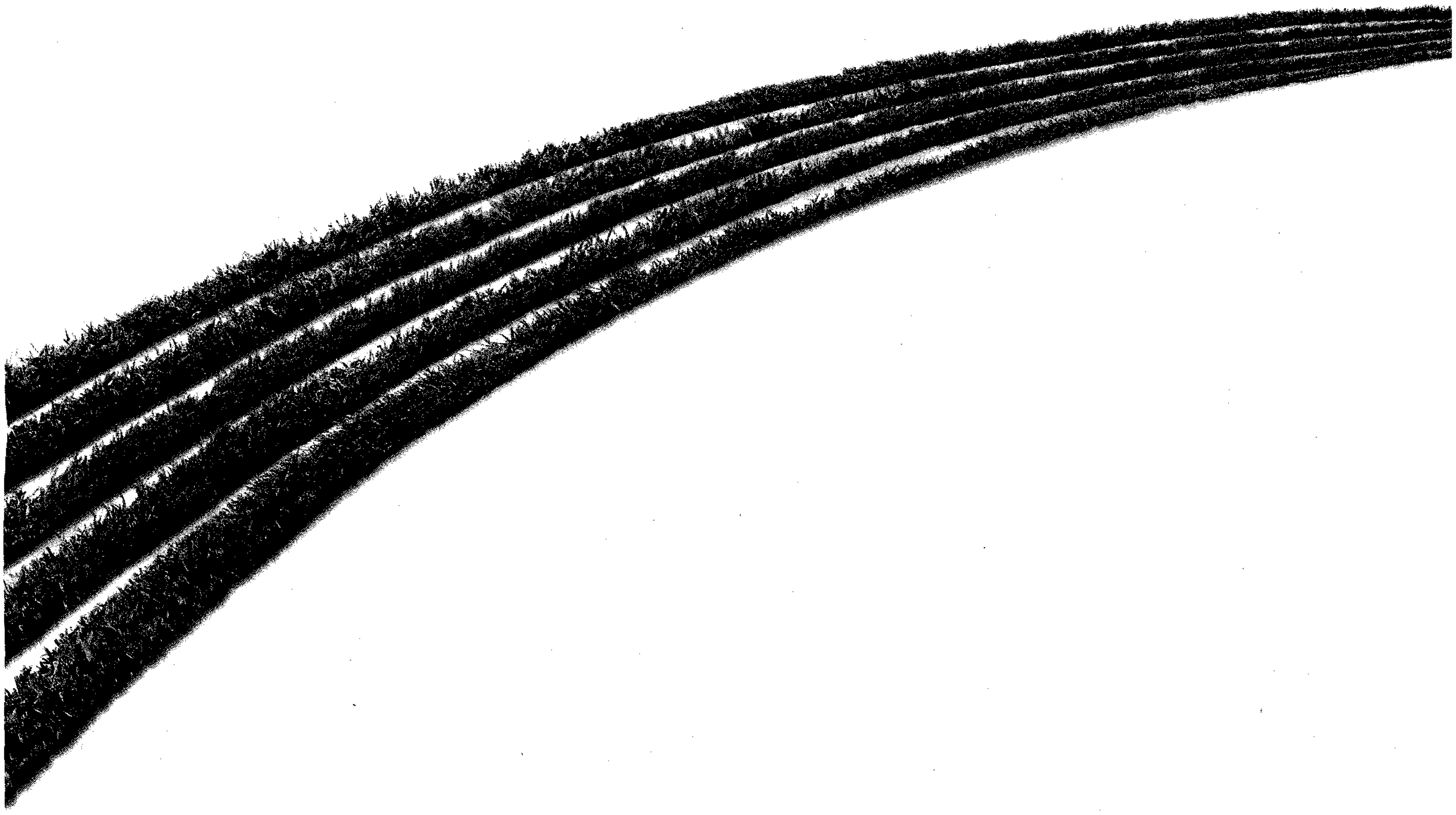

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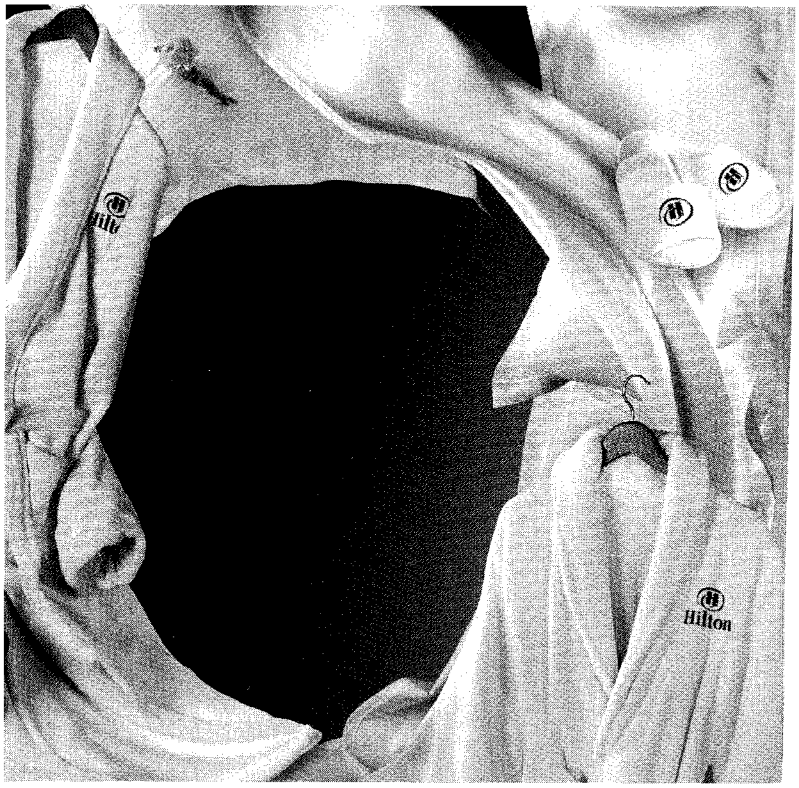
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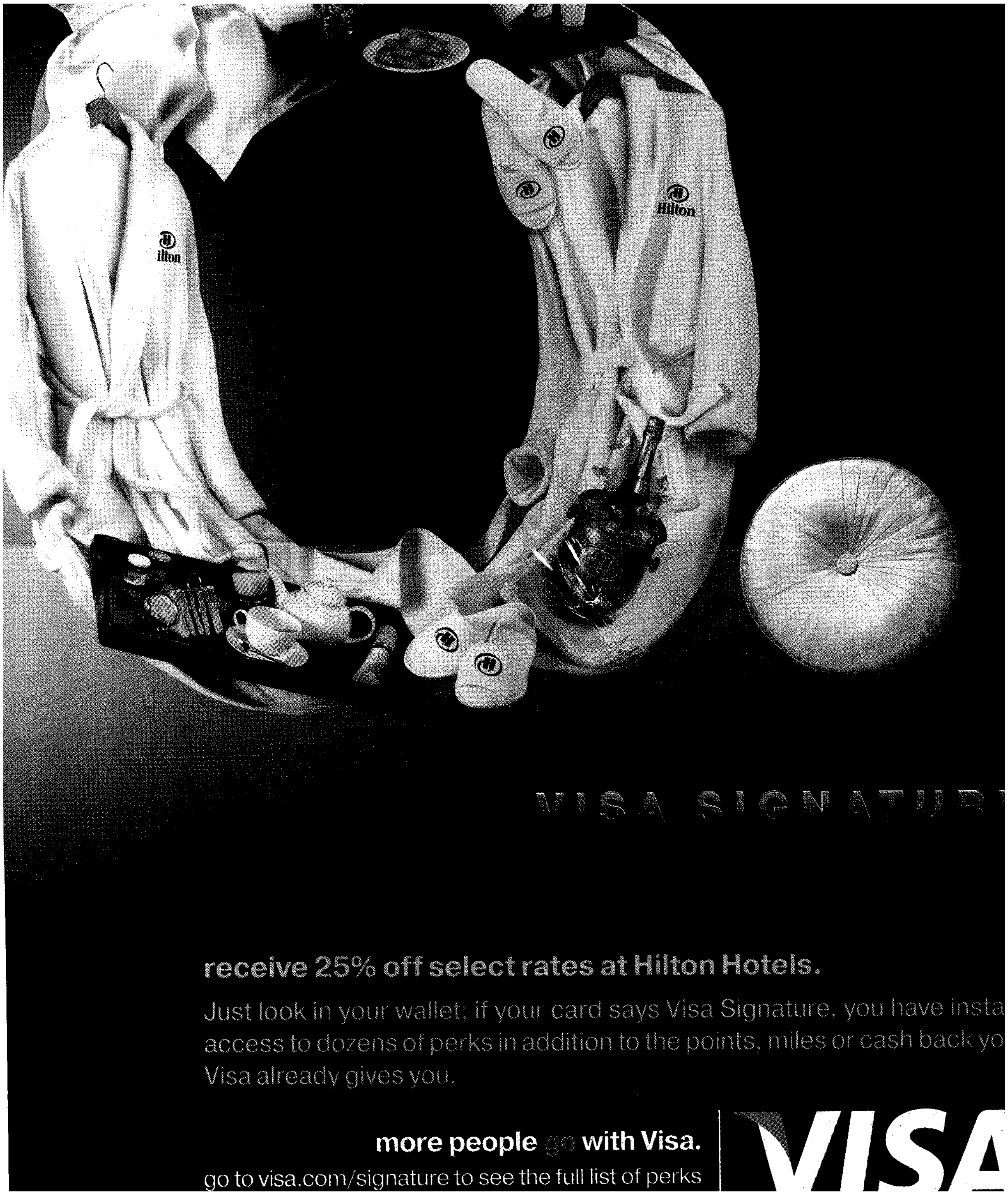

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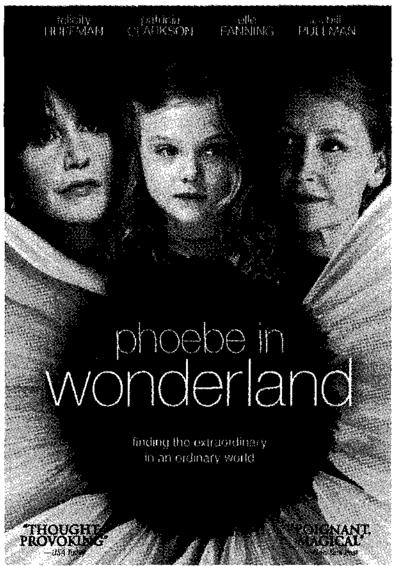

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CONTRIBUTORS

Laura Secor (Comment, p. 23) was a 2008-09 fellow at the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, at the New York Public Library, and is working on a book about Iran. Her last reporting piece from Iran for *The New Yorker*, "The Rationalist," was published in February.

Joan Acocella (The Talk of the Town, p. 25) is the author of "Twenty-eight Artists and Two Saints."

Rebecca Mead ("The Age of Innocence," p. 32) has been writing for the magazine since 1997.

Lizzie Widdicombe (The Talk of the Town, p. 26) is a member of the magazine's editorial staff.

Julie Bruck (Poem, p. 37) has published two poetry collections, "The End of Travel" and "The Woman Downstairs."

Elizabeth Kolbert ("The Catastrophist," p. 39) writes frequently about the environment.

Barry Blitt (Cover) is an artist and an illustrator whose work has appeared in the magazine since 1992. He has published several children's books, including "What's the Weather Inside?"

Connie Bruck ("Angelo's Ashes," p. 46) is a longtime *New Yorker* staff writer.

Alex Ross ("The Music Mountain," p. 56), the magazine's music critic, won the 2008 Guardian First Book Award for "The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century."

Edward Sorel (Illustration, p. 56) has contributed to the magazine since 1992. His book "The Mural at the Waverly Inn: A Portrait of Greenwich Village Bohemians" was published last fall.

Christian Wiman (Poem, p. 60) edits the magazine *Poetry*. "Ambition and Survival: Becoming a Poet" is his most recent book.

Stephen O'Connor (Fiction, p. 66) is the author of "Rescue," "Will My Name Be Shouted Out?," and "Orphan Trains."

James Wood (Books, p. 72), a staff writer, teaches at Harvard. His book "How Fiction Works" comes out in paperback next month.

Peter Schjeldahl (The Art World, p. 80) received the Clark Prize for Excellence in Arts Writing last year. He is the author of "Let's See: Writings on Art from *The New Yorker*."

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
Laura Secor takes readers' questions about Iran, and posts updates on News Desk. / More blogs: *Hendrik Hertzberg* on politics, *James Surowiecki* on the economy, *Richard Brody* on movies, plus the Book Bench, the Cartoon Lounge, and posts by *George Packer*, *Steve Coll*, and *Amy Davidson*. / Audio: *Dorothy Wickenden* hosts the Political Scene; *Jill Lepore* on parenting; music from Marlboro. / Slide shows: *Peter Schjeldahl* on Judith Leyster; Edith Wharton's letters. / Video: *Jorge Colombo's* iPhone sketches. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a complete archive of issues, back to 1925.

THE MAIL

HEALING HEALTH CARE

Atul Gawande's piece illustrates the painful realities of American health-care economics which have vexed many of us on the front lines of medicine for years ("The Cost Conundrum," June 1st). Sadly, McAllen, Texas, is not an anomaly. Wide variations in spending and procedure rates can be found from New Haven to Palm Beach, from Las Cruces, New Mexico, to Palm Springs. Statistics show that the United States spends more, per capita, on health care than any other country in the world, yet more than forty million Americans are uninsured. And the U.S. does very poorly for the money it spends, as measured by rates such as infant mortality, heart-disease mortality, and cancer mortality. Until we revise economic incentives to reward medical decisions based upon established scientific evidence and good medical outcomes, we will never control costs or experience better results.

John C. Baldwin, M.D.
President and Professor of Surgery
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
Lubbock, Texas

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of primary care as a major factor in the success of the Mayo Clinic model of health care. Intensely but narrowly trained subspecialists manage even the simplest problems very aggressively, with much higher rates of expensive imaging and invasive procedures. This inflates costs, exposes patients to avoidable procedural complications, and worsens outcomes. Owing largely to a widening pay disparity, today the proportion of medical students entering primary care is falling like a stone, even as the older cohort of family physicians retires en masse. Until this problem is effectively addressed, our high-cost, low-quality medical system will continue to worsen.

Geoffrey Wittig, M.D.
Dansville, N.Y.

A major impediment to minimizing testing is patient expectation. My patient with a viral chest cold expects a chest X-ray, to prove that his two-week cough isn't pneumonia (it isn't), and the mother of my three-year-old patient who tumbled off the sofa expects a CT scan, to prove that everything will be fine with the child's brain (it will be fine, except for the unknown long-term results of the radiation from the CT scan). When the tests aren't done, the patients leave my E.R. dissatisfied and write complaint letters to the hospital. And, in the rare instance that the viral chest cold later turns into pneumonia, the patient assumes that I "missed it" and wants to sue me. Doctors need to be held accountable for over-testing, but let's not forget how patient expectation affects the issue.

Gabriel Ledger, M.D.
Corvallis, Oregon

Much of the current debate surrounding the future of health care in America assumes that health care as we commonly know it would address our nation's health problems, if only we could maximize care and coverage while minimizing costs. But modern health care—physician led, individual focussed, and treatment oriented—is ill equipped to deliver what we're ultimately after: preventing those problems in the first place. Health promotion and disease prevention are instead the province of public health, which is widely touted as being responsible for the lion's share of the longevity gains we have experienced during the past century. Yet public-health spending is a pittance. We must recognize that health-care reform also requires more than reorganizing how doctors do business.

Noah Wohlert
Albuquerque, N.M.

•

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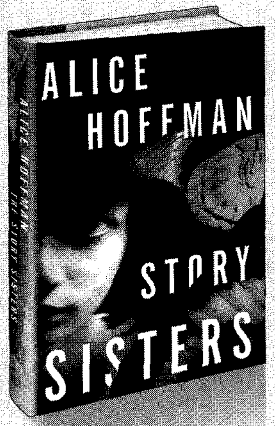

"'The Story Sisters,' for all its magic realism, is about a family navigating through motherhood, sisterhood, daughterhood. It's 'Little Women' on mushrooms."
—*New York Times Book Review*

"[A] heartbreaking novel about the powers and limits of love."
—*Redbook*

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"Machines Machines Machines...," at HERE Arts Center. Photograph by Landon Nordeman.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	24	25	26	27

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
SWEET THUNDER

One of the more intriguing out-of-town offerings this summer takes place in Rowayton, Connecticut, at Shakespeare on the Sound. The downtown director Joanna Settle leads a new production of "Midsummer Night's Dream," with music from Stew, the rocker responsible for "Passing Strange." (See page 11.)

NIGHT LIFE
BRAZILIAN BREEZE

Diana Krall, who sings romantic bossa-nova standards with the lightest of touches on her lush new album, "Quiet Nights," pays a visit to Carnegie Hall, backed by a full orchestra. (See page 12.)

ART
IDEA MAN

The American artist Dan Graham—photographer, performance artist, filmmaker, pavilion designer—has been enmeshed in the New York avant-garde for more than forty years. The Whitney Museum surveys his career in the exhibition "Dan Graham: Beyond" and a series of related events, including a rare acoustic performance on June 26 by the post-punk band the Feelies. (See page 12.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
PASTORAL STRAINS

Caramoor's summer concert season will range far and wide, delving into African and Hispanic music, but it begins on classical terrain, and with a dose of glamour. The mezzo-soprano Susan Graham joins David Robertson and the Orchestra of St. Luke's in a concert featuring works by Rossini and Beethoven, along with a selection of Mozart arias. (See page 16.)

MOVIES
AFRICA, IN AND OUT

The films of Abderrahmane Sissako—who was born in Mauritania, grew up in Mali, went to film school in Moscow, and moved to Paris—reflect his international background. MOMA is screening most of his work starting this week, including "Waiting for Happiness," about a young man who returns to Mauritania but has forgotten the language. (See page 19.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MOVING ON

Lorin Maazel, who is completing his seventh and final season as the music director of the New York Philharmonic, leaves the ensemble in better shape than when he found it. The orchestra of virtuosos is more disciplined, more rich-toned, and, seemingly, happier. Maazel's flair for clarity was evident when, in his third-to-last program, he led Benjamin Britten's "War Requiem." All components of the intricate structure, part grand Mass and part chamber song cycle, were crisply balanced. Yet the performance lacked emotional weight, and it is in the realm of emotion that Maazel has often come up short. In the preceding week, the Philharmonic clarinettist Stanley Drucker had made his final solo appearances at Avery Fisher Hall, playing Copland's Clarinet Concerto, and there the sense of occasion was greater; Drucker's tangy, sprung-rhythm style elicited a vital response from his colleagues. Maazel bows out this week with Mahler's Eighth, but Drucker's swinging farewell, after sixty brilliant years with the orchestra, may linger longer in the memory.

—*Alex Ross*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ARCHBISHOP SUPREME TARTUFFE
Classical Theatre of Harlem presents the première of Alfred Preisser and Randy Weiner's satire about a criminal church official, inspired by Molière's classic comedy. André De Shields and Ted Lange ("The Love Boat") star; Preisser directs. In previews. Opens June 25. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

POTOMAC THEATRE PROJECT
The politically minded company presents "The Europeans," by Howard Barker, directed by Richard Romagnoli, in repertory with "Thérèse Raquin," adapted by Neal Bell from the Zola novel, directed by Jim Petosa. Previews begin June 30. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE TIN PAN ALLEY RAG
Roundabout Theatre Company presents a new musical, written by Mark Saltzman, about a fictional meeting between Irving Berlin and Scott Joplin, featuring the music of both. Stafford Arima directs. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
Anne Hathaway stars as Viola in the Shakespeare comedy, the season opener for Shakespeare in the Park. The cast also includes Audra McDonald, Michael Cumpsty, Raúl Esparza, Julie White, Hamish Linklater, David Pittu, and Jay O. Sanders. Daniel Sullivan directs. In previews. Opens June 25. (Delacorte, Central Park, enter at 81st St. and Central Park W. For information, call 212-539-8750.)

NOW PLAYING

CORALINE
The protagonist of this musical, based on Neil Gaiman's 2002 best-selling children's book, should be defined by her vulnerability, not smothered in verbose cuteness, as she is in this adaptation (with a book by David Greenspan and music and lyrics by Stephin Merritt, of the Magnetic Fields). Coraline (Jayne Houdyshell) is a young English girl whose family moves to a creaky old house, where she gains access to another world. Of course, the world that Coraline enters is that of her own imagination—her id. But, strangely, once we're inside it we don't see anything truly transformative going on. After she passes through the looking glass—which happens relatively early in this lean, hundred-minute, intermissionless show—we can feel the gifted director, Leigh Silverman, ceding control of the production to Merritt and Greenspan, who pack on the whimsy like so much pancake makeup. Rather than exploit the burgeoning terror that Coraline might experience at being uprooted and tossed into new surroundings, Greenspan and Merritt concentrate on making this alternate version of her life even sweeter and quirkier than the real one. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/22/09.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

DANCE OF THE SEVEN HEADED MOUSE
Christopher McElroen directs a drama by Carole Gaunt, about a wealthy Upper East Side family coping with the death of a daughter. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

DOV AND ALI
In Anna Ziegler's modest play, Ali (Utkarsh Ambudkar), a Muslim high-school student, comes to see Dov (Adam Green), his Orthodox Jewish English teacher, to talk about William Golding's "The Lord of the Flies." It's not really the novel, though, that Ali wants to analyze—it's Dov's relationship with his non-Jewish girlfriend (Heidi Armbruster), which he's keeping secret from his parents. Ali has a secret, too: he's torn between his religious beliefs and his love for his sister (the confident and bright Anitha Gandhi), a heretic. Unfortunately, the playwright's philosophizing is neither profound nor particularly interesting, and it overshadows the sliver of story about how these young men hurt the women they love. Under the direction of Katherine Kovner, the acting is, for the most part, workmanlike rather than inspired. (Cherry Lane Studio, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200. Through June 27.)

FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS (PARTS 1, 8 & 9)
Concluding the Public LAB season is the world première of a new play by, and featuring, Suzan-Lori Parks. Jo Bonney directs the multilayered drama, which encompasses stories about slaves in the Civil War and a present-day general who is dying. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through June 28.)

KING LEAR
New York Classical Theatre celebrates its tenth anniversary of free outdoor theatre with the Shakespeare tragedy, directed by Stephen Burdman, now at Battery Park's Castle Clinton. (212-252-4531.)

THE PIED PIPERS OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE
In the Amoralists' revival of company co-founder Derek Ahonen's 2007 comedy, a hyper-liberal commune of young, pansexual utopianists is ripped apart when a member's straitlaced brother and a suspiciously benevolent landlord pay a couple of ill-timed visits to their Lower East Side love nest. What this nearly three-hour dose of high-energy Steppenwolf-style realism is doing at the avant-garde haven P.S. 122 is anyone's guess. But the young company's deep commitment and contagious exuberance—marred only by an eagerness to turn every scene into a screaming match, a handful of borderline overly passionate performances, and an extended instance of somewhat gratuitous full-frontal nudity—brings to mind the vitality that distinguished the early Off-Off Broadway work of artists like Sam Shepard only a generation ago. (P.S. 122, First Ave. at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Through June 28.)

SHAFRIKA, THE WHITE GIRL
A new musical by Anika Larsen, co-conceived and directed by April Nickell, based on Larsen's upbringing in a large, multiracial adoptive family. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-868-4444. Through June 28.)

SOHO PLAYHOUSE SUMMER SOLO SERIES
SoHo Playhouse inaugurates a series of one-night-only solo performances, including Dallas Roberts performing Adam Rapp's "Nocturne" on June 25, and, on June 29, Leo Farley and Stephen Payne's "Bukowski from Beyond." (15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

STUNNING
LCT3 presents a drama by David Adjmi; Anne Kauffman directs. (Reviewed in this issue.) (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Through June 27.)

SWEET STORM
At the start of Scott Hudson's drama, which takes place in the woods outside Tampa, in 1960, Bo (Eric T. Miller), a young travelling preacher glowing with excitement, carries Ruthie (Jamie Dunn), his feisty, fragile new bride, up into the tree house he's built her as a surprise for their honeymoon. It's not long before we discover that Ruthie doesn't have the use of her legs, her bladder control is tentative, she's faithless and angry, and she's terrified of Bo, who only wants to make her happy. In the style of early Mamet, Ruthie and Bo sit on the stage for seventy-five minutes and talk, and their conversation is lyrical, angry, far-reaching, and deep. This show is largely about surprise, not the least of which is the beauty and originality of the script and the unusual precision and abandon of the two actors, under the direction of Padraic Lillis. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE WIZ
The "Encores! Summer Stars" revival of the 1975 musical, a kitschy, all-black spin on "The Wizard of Oz," reveals just how flimsy and lacking in real attitude the show was to begin with. William F. Brown and Charlie Smalls didn't so much

EMILY EIBEL

rethink "Oz" as paper it over with soul music and sass, leaving small details like plot and character to sort themselves out. What endures, though, are the songs, like "Ease on Down the Road" and the anthem "Home"; Thomas Kail's staging glimmers with life only when he stands back and lets his stars—led by the silver-voiced Ashanti—wail them out. With LaChanze, as Aunt Em and Glinda, and Orlando Jones, in the title role. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Jack Hofsiss directs John van Druten's comedy "Bell, Book, and Candle," starring Arija Bareikis and Sam Robards, through June 28. For more information, visit www.baystreet.org. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
At the Unicorn, Eric Hill directs Brian Friel's drama "Faith Healer"; on the Main Stage through June 27, Scott Coulter directs Scott Siegel's "Broadway by the Year." For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the grounds of Boscobel, Terrence O'Brien directs Shakespeare's "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," in repertory with "Much Ado About Nothing" and "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)." For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

SHAKESPEARE ON THE SOUND
Joanna Settle directs "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with original music composed by Stew ("Passing Strange"), through June 28. The production moves to Greenwich, Conn., July 4-12. For more information, visit www.shakespeareonthesound.org. (Pinkney Park, 177 Rowayton Ave., Rowayton, Conn. 203-299-1300.)

Also Playing

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY: Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 28. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BLITHE SPIRIT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **GOD OF CARNAGE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IRENA'S VOW:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 28. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES:** HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101. Through June 27. **MARY STUART:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NEXT FALL:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **NEXT TO NORMAL:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **9 TO 5: THE MUSICAL:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE NORMAN CONQUESTS:** Circle in the Square, 235 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **OUR TOWN:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **ROCK OF AGES:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **RUINED:** City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **WAITING FOR GODOT:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **WEST SIDE STORY:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

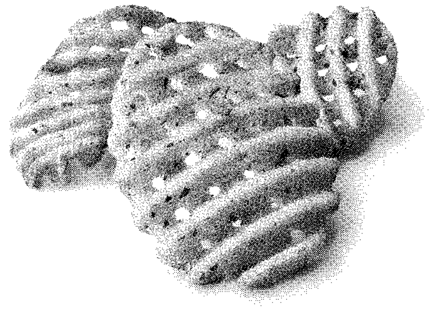
Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

THE BELL HOUSE
149 7th St., between Second and Third Aves., Brooklyn (718-643-6510)—June 26: New Jersey's **Smithereens.** June 27: **Steve Wynn and the Miracle 3.** Wynn started off his storied career in the early eighties as a key player in what was then called the Paisley Underground, making jangly pop with the Dream Syndicate. Since that ensemble disbanded, two decades ago, he has pursued a steady, if humble, solo career. This show commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dream Syndicate's 1984 album, "Medicine Show." Wynn will be playing it in its entirety.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 25: The **Lemonheads,** one of the more promising acts to break out of Boston's alternative-rock scene during the late eighties, matched a punky guitar sound with pronounced pop sensibilities and heartthrob Evan Dando's pinup charisma. The band is currently touring to promote "Varshons," an odd collection of cover tunes ranging from songs by the pop princess Christina Aguilera to the late punk degenerate GG Allin. June 27: Although they take their name from a fleeting moment in "Pee-wee's Big Adventure," the Brooklyn synth-pop trio **Au Revoir Simone** have the potential to attract a slightly dark-minded audience; the filmmaker David Lynch is a huge fan. He played their music at his recent wedding, and has

OUR BIGGER, THICKER CHIPS BEG THE QUESTION:

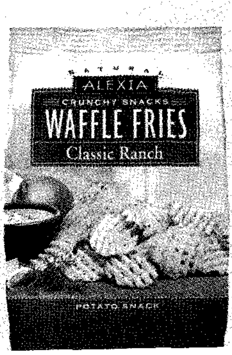
WHO THOUGHT OF THOSE SMALLER, THINNER CHIPS?



A GIANT LEAP FOR SNACK-KIND.™

NATURAL
ALEXIA

FOUND IN THE SNACK AISLE



referred to their breathy vocals and lackadaisical long-tone sound as a "joyous melancholy." Their new record is called "Still Night, Still Light."

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 27: Philadelphia's psychedelic-rock outfit **Dr. Dog** has a down-home sound that combines a country beat and a lo-fi nineties sensibility. Matthew Houck's one-man indie-folk band, **Phosphorescent,** which mixes a gospel pitch and a Will Oldham mournfulness, and **These United States,** a ragtag psych-folk group that records its music in hallways and basements across the country, round out the bill.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 25: A benefit concert with **311, Ziggy Marley,** and the **Expendables.** June 27: "Istanbulive," an afternoon of contemporary music from Turkey, features the folk-rocker **Mazhar Fuat Özkan,** the pop act **Painted on Water,** and the clarinettists **Hüsnü Senlendirici** and **Vassilis Saleas** (who is actually Greek), backed by the **NY Gypsy All-Stars,** among other acts.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Bridget Everett, Neal Medlyn, and Kiki & Herb's Kenny Mellman—a kind of exhibitionist dream team—host the monthly series **"Our Hit Parade,"** based on the old radio and TV show, in which various downtown types perform their raunchy, ironic, and outlandish versions of pop hits. On June 24, they're joined by Stephin Merritt and Claudia Gonson, of the Magnetic Fields, and the drag king Murray Hill, among others.

(LE) POISSON ROUGE
158 Bleecker St. (212-505-3474)—June 25: The Icelandic electronica composer and pianist **Jóhann Jóhannsson,** accompanied by a string quartet and a percussionist, brings his moody soundscapes to the Wordless Music Series. Jóhannsson will be playing, among other material, works from his most recent release, "Fordlândia," the second installment in a bold trilogy about man's relationship with technology. Fordlândia is the name of a doomed, all-American small town that Henry Ford erected in the middle of the Amazon in the late nineteen-twenties in an effort to break the rubber monopoly. Jóhannsson's sombre pieces, built around slow-moving string parts and soft, burbling rhythmic patterns, and his stirring use of silence and aching melodies are entrancing.

MUSIC HALL OF WILLIAMSBURG
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-486-5400)—June 24: The lanky, reedy-voiced **Hank Williams III** takes his musical inspiration from his granddaddy. An unapologetic proponent of living fast and high, Hank III can work the purest bluegrass, the fiercest punk-metal, and practically everything in between. He appears with his band Assjack.

PUBLIC ASSEMBLY
70 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-384-4586)—June 28: **Pansy Division,** which helped inaugurate the "queercore" offshoot of San Francisco's early-nineties punk scene, has recently reunited, and has evolved significantly. The group's new record, "That's So Gay," balances the tongue-in-cheek impudence of its initial efforts with ample emotional introspection, something that's absent from much of contemporary pop-punk.

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—June 24: Though he recently claimed that he was retiring the moniker, Norman Cook returns as **Fatboy Slim,** the nineties dance-floor phenomenon responsible for such hook-laden club hits as "The Rockafeller Skank," "Praise You," and "Weapon of Choice." This performance may act as a swan song of sorts, as Cook has a clever new party act, the Brighton Port Authority. It released its début album in March, entitled "I Think We're Gonna Need a Bigger Boat."

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—June 24: The Glaswegians **Camera Obscura** are back with songs from their latest album, "My Maudlin Career," which is the second installment in the band's attempt to dispense with the bookish twee that first ignited their career a decade ago. Their sound has evolved away from a resemblance to fellow-Scots Belle and Sebastian and toward an eclectic pastiche of sixties pop idioms.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-423-3500)—June 26: The semi-legendary post-punk group the **Feelies** formed in Haledon, New Jersey, in 1976. The band developed a unique sound based on intricate yet simple guitar rave-ups and yearning vocals that emphasize the ecstatic roots of rock and roll. Despite the group's catchy and influential sound (R.E.M., among others, has acknowledged a debt to the band's 1980 début record, "Crazy Rhythms"), the Feelies, who disliked live performing, never found commercial success. Last year, after a hiatus of seventeen years, the group got back together, delighting legions of fans. For this performance, the first of a series of concerts connected to the Conceptual artist Dan Graham's current retrospective, the band will play a rare acoustic set.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 23-27: On his spirited new album, "PIZZArelli Party," the guitarist and singer **John Pizzarelli** enlists gifted family members, including his brother, **Martin,** his wife, **Jessica Molaskey,** and his father, **Bucky,** a guitar icon himself, all of whom join him here.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 25-28: **Rachelle Ferrell's** six-octave voice and her winningly eclectic taste lend her an advantage over other contemporary jazz-influenced singers.

CARNEGIE HALL
Seventh Ave. at 57th St. (212-247-7800)—June 23-24: Success has yet to spoil the engaging vocalist **Diana Krall,** whose subtle approach draws listeners into her world. She recently reunited with the arranger Claus Ogerman (who worked with Sinatra, Jobim, and Getz back in the day) for a lushly orchestral new bossa-nova release, "Quiet Nights." The last time Krall and Ogerman collaborated, in 2001 for "The Look of Love," they took home a Grammy. Krall will be backed by a full orchestra for these shows.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 23-28: The saxophonist **Joe Lovano's Streams of Expression** ensemble is among his more ambitious projects: a horn-heavy band that has tackled the composer Gunther Schuller's reworkings of music from Miles Davis's famed "Birth of the Cool" recordings.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 25-28: **Jacky Terrasson's** career never took off quite the way it was expected to after the hoopla following his 1993 win at the Thelonious Monk Piano Competition and subsequent signing by Blue Note Records. Still, he's an engaging stylist. He's here with the bassist **Ben Williams** and the drummer **Jamire Williams.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—If you've seen the pianist Randy Weston's band over the past two decades, you've witnessed **Alex Blake** pummelling his bass with melodious glee. On June 24, he leads his own quartet, joined by the British saxophonist **Chris Hunter.** June 25-28: The **Joey DeFrancesco** trio. He hasn't quite learned the virtues of less is more, but the exciting if musically verbose DeFrancesco is determined to keep the Hammond-organ aesthetic alive and thriving in the twenty-first century. His guests here include the saxophonist **Jerry Weldon,** on June 25-27.

SMALLS
183 W. 10th St. (212-252-5091)—June 24: Solo piano from the club's co-owner **Spike Wilner,** followed by the guitar great **Gene Bertoncini** and his trio.

THE STONE
Avenue C at 2nd St. (No phone)—June 30: The protean guitarist **Marc Ribot** presents a set of solo improvisation. Ribot, a New Jersey native and a gritty veteran of the downtown-music scene, is capable—and convincing—in many different stylistic modes, from noisy, rock-driven blowouts (which dominate his power trio, Ceramic Dog) to the angular lyricism showcased on Tom Waits albums like "Rain Dogs." His solo performances, however, deliver his most riveting and vulnerable work. They tend to highlight his quieter side, often weaving in complex melodic phrases and classical-style fingerpicking.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 23-28: The **Cohen** siblings—the saxophonist and clarinettist **Anat,** the pianist **Yuval,** and the trumpeter **Avishai**—are among the recent influx of talented Israeli jazz musicians. Their collective sextet is fleshed out by the keyboardist **Aaron Goldberg,** the bassist **Matt Penman,** and the drummer **Greg Hutchinson.**

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul."** Through Sept. 20. ♦ **"Francis Bacon: A Centenary Retrospective."** Through Aug. 16. ♦ **"The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984."** Through Aug. 2. ♦ **"Roxy Paine on the Roof: Maelstrom."** Through Oct. 25. ♦ **"The Model as Muse: Embodying Fashion."** Through Aug. 9. ♦ **"Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages."** Through Aug. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"James Ensor."** Opens June 28. ♦ **"Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Projects 90: Song Dong."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Looking at Music: Side 2."** Through Nov. 30. ♦ **"Aernout Mik."** Through July 27. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Frank Lloyd Wright: From Within Outward."** Through Aug. 23. ♦ **"Intervals: Julieta Aranda."** Through July 19. (Open Fridays, and Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Saturdays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"Dan Graham: Beyond."** Opens June 25. ♦ **"Claes Oldenburg: Early Sculpture, Drawings, and Happenings Films."** Through Aug. 30. ♦ **"Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen: The Music Room."** Through Aug. 30. ♦ **"Sadie Benning: Play Pause."** Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Yinka Shonibare MBE."** Opens June 26. ♦ **"Gustave Caillebotte: Impressionist Paintings from Paris to the Sea."** Through July 5. ♦ **"Patricia Cronin: Harriet Hosmer, Lost and Found."** Through Jan. 24. ♦ **"Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Reflections in the Electric Mirror: New Feminist Video."** Through Jan. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Extreme Mammals: The Biggest, Smallest, and Most Amazing Mammals of All Time."** Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"Climate Change: The Threat to Life and a New Energy Future."** Through Aug. 16. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"Kaleidoscope Quilts: The Art of Paula Nadelstern."** The Bronx-

based quilting virtuoso does for fabric what mirrors do for a kaleidoscope, turning scraps of colored cloth into prismatic optical confections, from the fractal opulence of the Persian-rug-colored "More Is More" to the cool blue majesty of "Ice Crystals." The show underscores Nadelstern's affinities with a trio of side shows: a selection of small, black-and-white photomicrographs of snowflakes by Wilson Alwyn Bentley (1865-1931); five contemporary kaleidoscopes in materials ranging from stained glass (by Sue Rioux) to handsomely carved hardwood (by Henry Bergeson), and a pair of nineteenth-century models, one by the Scottish scientist Sir David Brewster (1781-1868), who invented the device. But Nadelstern's quilts are so beautiful on their own that these ancillary materials do more to dilute their impact than to illuminate it. Through Sept. 13. ♦ **"The Treasure of Ulysses Davis."** The Savannah, Georgia, barber and sculptor, who died in 1990, at the age of seventy-six, rarely sold his carved-wood sculptures. Instead, the self-taught artist turned his barbershop into a one-man museum. Davis was a patriot with a passion for civil rights, as evidenced here by a lineup of miniature busts of Washington, Lincoln, J.F.K., and R.F.K., topped off by one of Martin Luther King, Jr. Religion was another favorite theme; Jesus, Buddha, Moses, and an ujamaa (a Tree of Life composition favored by the Makonde of Tanzania and Mozambique) all make appearances. Davis also had a fantastical streak, seen in works like "Creature from Another Planet with Two Noses" and the fancifully adorned boxes he called "twinklets." The artist himself makes a cameo appearance, in the form of a bust of a gray-haired gent perched on an intricately carved ottoman. Through Sept. 6. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Yang Fudong: Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest."** Through Sept. 13. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS
1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—**"Living and Dreaming: The 29th 'Artists in the Marketplace' Exhibition."** This annual exhibition of emerging New York artists—thirty-six this year—is usually packed to the gills, but guest curator Micaela Giovannotti gives the art room to breathe. As the title suggests, two tendencies emerge. The dreamers include Nathan Bennett (a painstaking reconstruction of a section of the spaceship in "Alien"), Eva Davidova (a video installation of people levitating, with digital assistance), and Jeffrey Hargrave (a hilarious wall of handcrafted voodoo dolls). Rooted in the "living" here and now are Abigail Simon's photographs of abandoned urban spaces, and Amy Pryor's wall collage of starburst-shaped advertising alerts, clipped from circulars, informing consumers that a product is "Certified Organic," "Safe & Fun!," or "Looks Like Genuine Leather." Through Sept. 13. (Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (212-217-5800)—**"Isabel Toledo: Fashion from the Inside Out."** Through Sept. 26. (Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Portraits, Pastels, Prints: Whistler in the Frick Collection."** Through Aug. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Avedon Fashion 1944-2000."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"David Seidner: Paris Fashions, 1945."** Through Sept. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Creating the Modern Stage: Designs for Theatre and Opera."** Through Aug. 16. ♦ **"Pages of Gold: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan."** Through Sept. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Dutch Seen: New York Rediscovered."** Through Sept. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Kalup Linzy: If It Don't Fit."** Through June 28. ♦ **"Collected: Propositions on the Permanent Collection."** Through June 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

TABLES FOR TWO
ARMANI / RISTORANTE

ARMANI / RISTORANTE 5th AVENUE

717 Fifth Ave., at 56th St. (212-207-1902)—Armani / 5th Avenue, according to the company literature, is supposed to be a "concept store," and Armani / Ristorante, housed on its third floor, above suits, ties, candles, umbrellas, pillows, vases, cosmetics, watches, and ice buckets, is supposed to be a "unique dining experience." In other words, every mall needs a food court. This one is more outwardly slinky than most. Not long after noon, on a recent Wednesday, a lone man, with strands of gray pearls wrapped around his wrist, toyed with a flute of champagne and stared into the distance. He would have had a great view of Fifth Avenue had the restaurant's designers not chosen to shroud its windows in mesh shades. The strands of green, blue, and red bulbs lining the glass didn't seem very Armani. Neither did projections of the skyline onto random floors and lavatory doors—aren't cityscapes Donna Karan's thing? The restaurant is every bit a brand extension, so it seemed strange that Armani's brand of impeccability didn't extend to the menus (which were beat-up), the central white staircase (dirty, scratched), or the reservations system (a piece of loose-leaf paper, apparently). At the bar, a manager and a bartender argued, loudly. The dispute seemed to be about a pen. Their passion did not extend to a pair of women who were waiting for a table, or, once the women were seated, to their full glasses of wine, paid for and awaiting transferral.

The consulting chef at Armani / Ristorante is Lorenzo Viani, who became friends with Giorgio Armani, the literature notes, "after Mr. Armani dined at Viani's Michelin-starred Ristorante Lorenzo, in the seaside town of Forte dei Marmi in northern Tuscany." Viani's specialty is seafood—a decent risotto with prawns and cabbage, slightly gritty scallops. One patron, a banker whose conversation spanned credit-default swaps to "cardio," said that he ate at Armani often: "It's not a male lunch place, or an estrogen-fest. It's balanced." The food, too, has an appealing discretion, but it can border on sterile. The tagliatelle with tomato sauce is pure and unexuberant. It is exactly what it says it is. Sea bass is just that: nice white fish on a nice white plate. Viani's quiet unities are missing from other parts of the menu. There are few enticing salads, a miscalculation given the crowd. One salad, involving shaved artichokes, is lifeless enough to require both salt and pepper and some olive oil, filched from the bread plate. There's a dolci counter on the way out, offering Armani pralines and fruit jellies, but the way they're presented—under glass, like accessories or specimens—doesn't really make you feel like splurging. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner and Sundays for lunch. Entrées $16-$40.)

—*Lauren Collins*

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

GORDON PARKS
A savvy selection of portraits by this important African-American photographer emphasizes the range of his work, much of which originally appeared in *Life* magazine. His black subjects—from Malcolm X and Langston Hughes to a Harlem gang leader and a Kansas couple in their Sunday best—stand out; pictures of Muhammad Ali steal the show. Parks also made engaging portraits of Alberto Giacometti, Ingrid Bergman, Leonard Bernstein, and the hard-bitten subject of "Gambling Woman," who somehow escaped Lisette Model's camera. Best of all is the famous shot of a man peering out over the rim of a manhole in 1949, an image made even more arresting here, in its luxury-goods surroundings. Through June 30. (Hermès, 691 Madison Ave. at 62nd St. 212-751-3181.)

LARRY RIVERS
The late painter's glory days, in the fifties, and bumpy decline, in the sixties, are recapped. A hipster given to fine-art fever dreams, Rivers at his best had a racy, hard-and-soft style (Ingres meets Bonnard, by way of de Kooning and Hofmann); wit (mock-heroic portraiture á la Gericault); pathos ("The Last Civil War Veteran"); proto-Pop celerity (cigarette packs and French money); and, always, a fetching line, embellished with deft smears and erasures. Before succumbing to forced mannerism, Rivers channelled an excitement that still crackles, notably in urbane collaborations with New York's best poet after Walt Whitman, Frank O'Hara. Through July 31. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-262-5050.)

Short List

NOBUYOSHI ARAKI: Yoshii, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-5550. Through June 26. **PATTY CHANG:** Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-752-2929. Through June 27. **HELEN LEVITT:** Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930. Through June 26. **MIMMO ROTELLA:** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through July 31. **KATRÍN SIGURDARDÓTTIR:** Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444. Through Aug. 21. **"BLUE":** Graham, 32 E. 67th St. 212-535-5767. Through Aug. 28.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

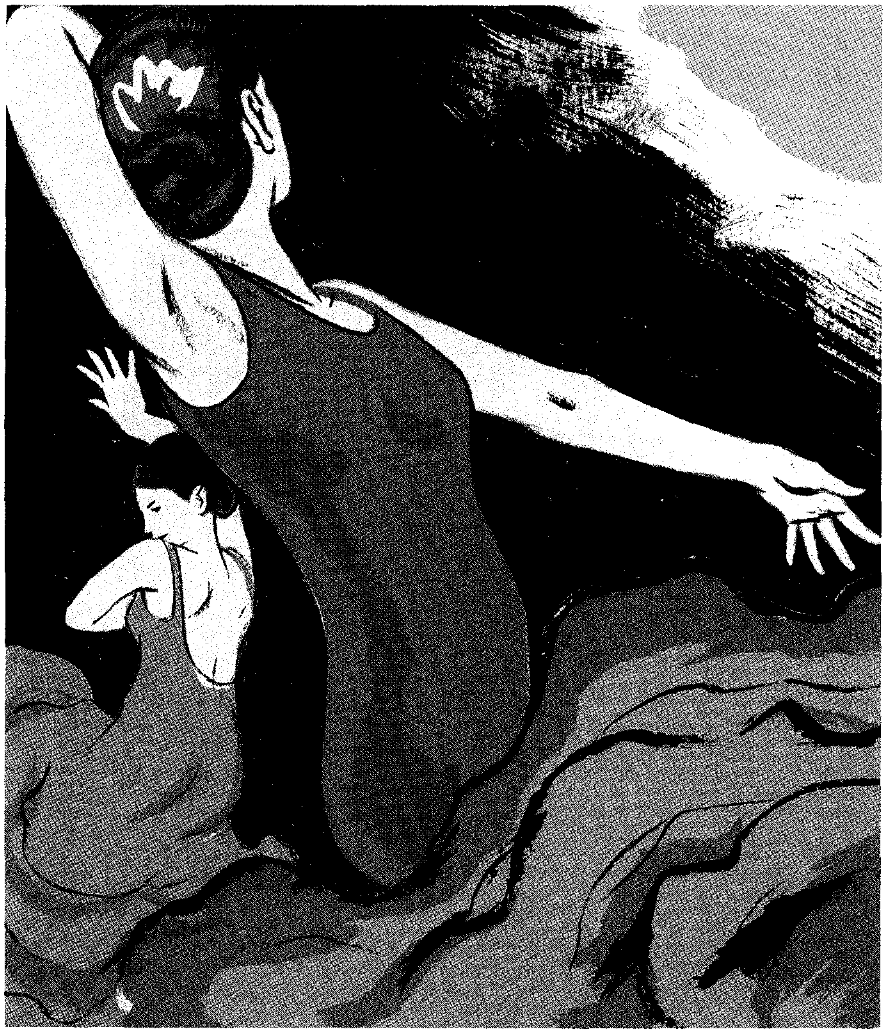
SHINIQUE SMITH
Smith's current installation in the project room at the Studio Museum in Harlem overwhelms the basement walls and spills onto the floor; her 2007 exhibition at the now-defunct Moti Hasson gallery was an overhung sensory assault. Here, Smith reins herself in, refining the best elements of her work with bravura. Vivacious paintings are a hybrid of Chinese calligraphy, Ab Ex, and graffiti. Works made from textiles (the artist's signature material)

JESSIE WENDER

are honed into something verging on minimalism: a series of bright, monochromatic panels on the wall; clothing bound together into a cube on the floor. But a chair on which bunches of clothing have been arranged into a vaguely anthropomorphic shape—titled "Whistler's Mother"—shows that, when she wants to, Smith can still let it all hang out. Through July 31. (Lambert, 550 W. 21st St. 212-242-3611.)

BRIAN ULRICH

Ulrich's ongoing documentation of American consumerism at the suburban-mall level has been especially sensitive to changing times. His latest color photographs deal with the effects of the recent downturn: shuttered stores and sad thrift shops.



Jacob's Pillow opens with Belén Maya and Rocío Molina in "Mujeres."

PATRICK LEGER

Because people rarely enter Ulrich's frame, there's a pervasive sense of abandonment and loss. In the window of a furniture store whose interior has been stripped bare, a sign boasts "Over 100 Years." Façades with ghosts of former signage, empty parking lots, a sea of unused plastic hangers—this is the new economic landscape, and it's depressingly bleak. Through July 3. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

"THE EDGE OF VISION: ABSTRACTION IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY"

The critic and curator Lyle Rexer draws from the most recent work in his excellent history of photographic abstraction, "The Edge of Vision: the Rise of Abstraction in Photography," for this shrewd survey show. The nineteen photographers here represent a wide variety of approaches, some of which are based in sly subversions of representation (Barbara Kasten, Roland Fischer, Penelope Umbrico). But most of the artists use unusual and deliberately accident-prone processes to turn out unique prints. These include Charles Lindsay's alarming sci-fi eruptions; Ellen Carey's hard-edged, imageless Polaroids; and Ilan Wolff's explosive encounters between the elements and photographic paper. Through July 16. (Aperture, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555.)

"PALOMAR: EXPERIMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHY"

Sensing a trend toward anything-goes experimentation (think Wolfgang Tillmans, Eileen Quinlan, Liz Deschenes), the gallery pulls together a tight, terrific show of six young artists who use photography in unconventional ways. They have little in common except nerve and formal grace, expressed in modestly scaled work. Perhaps the most elegant is Phil Chang, who echoes Tillmans in two quasi-abstract images of curling paper. But Mariah Robinson, Tamar Halpern, Asha Schechter, Talia Chetrit, and Nancy de Holl also make strong showings with layered, intriguing pictures that deserve solo follow-up shows. Through June 27. (Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-3363.)

Short List

PETER BEGLEY: Zarre, 529 W. 20th St. 212-255-0202. Through July 24. **ZARINA HASHMI:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through July 31. **PAULA HAYES:** Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889. Through Aug. 15. **DOROTHY IANNONE:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Opens June 25. **CHRIS MARKER:** Peter Blum, 526 W. 29th St. 212-244-6055. Through July 31. **STEPHEN SHORE:** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121. Through July 18. **BASIL WOLVERTON:** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through Aug. 14. **"THE FEMALE GAZE":** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Opens June 25. **"SLOUGH":** Nolan, 527 W. 29th St. 212-925-6190. Through June 27.

GALLERIES—QUEENS

"PIG"

The motto of this carnivalesque summer group show could be cribbed from the title of Paola Pivi's rhinestone-encrusted gate: "If You Like It, Thank You. If You Don't Like It, I Am Sorry. Enjoy Anyway." At first, the point seems to be that sight is not the only sense—take a whiff of Pivi's stuffed ox standing in a mound of fragrant coffee beans, or drop a quarter into one of the goofy motorized sculptures by the art collective Gelatin and tool around the gallery. But egalitarian politics lurk beneath the free-for-all atmosphere. A Peter Max-bright wall text by Pivi reads "Free Tibet," and Gelatin titles one of its vehicles "Henry Moore for the Poor." Through Aug. 9. (Deitch Studios, 4-40 44th Dr., Long Island City. 212-343-7300.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

The company returns to familiar ground, its nine-year-old production of "Swan Lake." The dual role of Odette and Odile—majestic captive in one act, victorious minx in the next—will be performed by no fewer than seven ballerinas, one for every taste. On Friday, Veronika Part—who captures Odette's grandeur—will dance with the Italian superstar Roberto Bolle. Many an eye will mist over Saturday evening, when the great Nina Ananiashvili—strong, exciting, mercurial—takes her final bow with A.B.T., with Angel Corella at her side. Casts appear on the company's Web site. ♦ June 22-23 and June 25 at 7:30, June 24 at 2 and 7:30, June 26 at 8, and June 27 at 2 and 8: "Swan Lake." ♦ June 29-30 at 7:30: "Sylvia." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 11.)

KEIGWIN + COMPANY

"Triptych," Keigwin's short new suite, falls on the abstract end of his aesthetic. He delightfully meets the challenge of a cast of fifty in "Bolero NYC"; the older "Natural Selection," gripping and breathtaking, and "Love Songs," tender and playful, are his best work to date. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 23 at 7:30, June 25 at 8, and June 27 at 2 and 8.)

NAOMI GOLDBERG HAAS

Dances for a Variable Population, Haas's company of younger and older women, descends in dark sunglasses on the Whitehall Ferry Terminal for "Fanfare," part of L.M.C.C.'s "Sitelines." (4 South St. 212-219-9401. June 24 and June 26-27 at 12:30 and 1:30.)

NICHOLAS LEICHTER DANCE

"Killa" is an apt title for Leichter's new dance. Killing it, working it, bringing attitude and invention to bear on every beat is the piece's aim and its pleasure-giving achievement. African movements, samba hips, the stylings of various Jacksons, and the funky chicken all find a place. Starting out in geeky corporate garb, the dancers progressively attain glamour under the influence of the unclassifiable guest artist Monstah Black, who performs his own songs perched on platform heels. "Free the Angels," an expanded version of Leichter's 2001 treatment of Stevie Wonder's "Songs in the Key of Life," completes the program. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 24 at 7:30, June 26 at 8, and June 28 at 2 and 7:30.)

SAM KIM

"Dumb Dumb Bunny," Kim's last evening-length work, made fashionable conformity look like zombie behavior. Her new "Darling" fixes on the black comedy of horror films, treating the demented like any other dysfunctional family. Think of the character relationships in "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" scrutinized by the analytic mind of a smart choreographer. (P.S. 122, First Ave. at 9th St. 212-352-3101. June 24-27 at 8 and June 28 at 6.)

KATE WEARE COMPANY

For "Lean-to," the visual artist Kurt Perschke has designed an enormous sculpture that stretches for the upper reaches of St. Mark's Church and leans out loomingly. Weare's choreography involves much leaning as well, but that's only an exaggeration of her dominant aesthetic: intimate, one body depending on another, not just physically but emotionally. Michel Galante's spectral score, played live by his Argento Chamber Ensemble, helps make "Lean-to" cooler than Weare's sexy "Bridge of Sighs" and its shockingly audible slaps. But both pieces count as some of the most exciting work of the moment. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. June 25-27 at 8:30.)

"DIAGHILEV'S THEATRE OF MARVELS"
The dance historian Lynn Garafola, an authority on the Ballets Russes, curates this exhibit at the New York Public Library for Performing Arts, which includes set designs, costumes, archival film, and photographs documenting the trajectory of the groundbreaking company, founded a hundred years ago in Paris. Over the course of two decades, the entrepreneur and Renaissance man Serge Diaghilev would bring into being a wholly new concept of ballet that was experimental, erotic, and intensely theatrical, with productions like "The Firebird," "Petrouchka," "Les Noces," "Le Pas d'Acier," and "Prodigal Son," changing ballet forever. (Donald and Mary Oenslager Gallery, 40 Lincoln Center Plaza. 212-870-1630. June 26-Sept. 12.)

UMBILICAL BROTHERS
An Australian comedy duo is unusual fare for the dance-centric Joyce. The comedy of David Collins and Shane Dundas is physical, though—unconventional miming on a mostly bare stage, enlivened by funny voices and sound effects made with their mouths. Theirs are the kinds of show in which random bits turn into running jokes and seeming spontaneity gets woven into plotlike structure. The central conceit of "Speedmouse"—that the live show is actually digital, complete with glitches, fast-forwarding, and an actors' commentary track—is less funny than the accelerating build of hit-and-miss gags and the mute, surly roadie in a clown suit. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 29-30 at 7:30. Through July 11.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
The season opens with flamenco of a high order. "Mujeres" is a duo program featuring Belén Maya and the twenty-four-year-old Rocío Molina. Their *paso a dos* is that rare thing, a piece of flamenco choreography that holds up as choreography, achieving modern-dance sophistication without betraying flamenco tradition. The ladies' solos demonstrate that tradition in vital form. Molina, a revelation on her first visit to America a few years back, hasn't since failed to be anything less than riveting. (Ted Shawn, Becket, Mass. 413-243-9919. June 24-28. Through Aug. 30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
City Opera, out of sight and worryingly out of mind, makes a welcome return under the auspices of the River to River Festival. The company's three "Opera for All" presentations are populist in appeal—that is, free—but diverse in offerings; all shows feature orchestral accompaniment. June 25 at 7: A one-hour version of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," sung in English. (Rockefeller Park, River Terrace at Warren St.) ♦ June 26 at 7: A rare performance of Massenet's searing one-act opera "La Navarraise," the urbane composer's lone detour into the violent manner of Italian verismo. (World Financial Center Winter Garden, 220 Vesey St.) ♦ June 27 at 7: The series ends with a concert of favorite arias from "La Bohème," "Madama Butterfly," and other operas. (South Street Seaport, Pier 17.) (No tickets required. www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

ONE WORLD SYMPHONY: "VANESSA"
Is Samuel Barber's first opera, recently staged by City Opera, making a comeback? These performances by Sung Jin Hong's young ensemble might not reach Lincoln Center levels of artistry, but 2010 is the Barber centenary, so any performances of this elegant melodrama are welcome. (Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. June 26 at 8. ♦ Ansche Chesed Synagogue, West End Ave. at 100th St. June 28 at 8.) (Tickets at the door.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
And so it ends, Lorin Maazel's seven-year tenure at the helm of one of America's Big Five orchestras. Before the maestro heads out to pursue his future musical activities at his Virginia estate and in Spain, he will conduct the ensemble in one of the grandest works of a fellow New York Philharmonic composer-conductor, Gustav Mahler—the Symphony No. 8, the so-called "Symphony of a Thousand." The impressive list of vocal soloists includes Christine Brewer, Mary Phillips, Anthony Dean Griffey, and Wolfgang Schöne, assisted by the New York Choral Artists, the Dessoff Symphonic Choir, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. June 24-25 at 7:30 and June 26-27 at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: "SUMMERTIME CLASSICS"
Bramwell Tovey's annual series with the Phil concentrates on what used to be called the "light classics" repertoire, offered in a more relaxed setting and framed by the conductor's avuncular repartee. The first of four programs is a Russian festival, with the pianist Vladimir Feltsman as guest; it features works by Tchaikovsky ("Romeo and Juliet"), Khachaturian, and Rachmaninoff (the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. June 30 and July 1-2 at 7:30.)

PALO ALTO CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The cellist Matt Haimovitz, an alumnus who has forged his own distinctive path, will be the special guest in this concert by the exceptional Bay Area youth orchestra of strings; the program features works by Schubert (an arrangement of the "Arpeggione" Sonata) and Suk, along with new pieces by Stephen Feigenbaum and Luna Pearl Woolf. Benjamin Simon conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. June 30 at 8.)

RECITALS

"THE MOVADO HOUR": MUSIC BY MESSIAEN
Programs at this stylish series of one-hour concerts often have a concentrated intensity. The next will likely fit that pattern, as two musicians admired in the contemporary sphere, Marilyn Nonken and Sarah Rothenberg, perform Messiaen's masterwork for two pianos, "Visions de l'Amen." A wine reception precedes the concert. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. June 24 at 7. To reserve free tickets, which are required, call 212-279-4200.)

BARGEMUSIC
String quartets dominate the weekend at the floating chamber-music series. June 26-27 at 8: The St. Petersburg Quartet, distinguished advocates for the Russian tradition, take a more Western European tack this time, offering works by Schubert, Beethoven (the "Razumovsky" Quartet No. 2, in E Minor), and Chausson (the exquisite Concerto in D Major for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet, with Mark Peskanov and Doris Stevenson as guests). ♦ June 28 at 3: The Escher Quartet, an acclaimed young American group that seeks to emulate the Dutch artist's immaculate unity, makes its barge début with Haydn's Quartet in D Major, Op. 71, No. 2, Bartók's Quartet No. 2, and Brahms's Quartet No. 1 in C Minor. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MUSIC AT (LE) POISSON ROUGE
The vibrant downtown club offers a range of musical events, classical and otherwise. June 25

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at 6:30 and 9: Jóhann Jóhannsson, a young Icelandic phenom who combines electronic and acoustic sounds to haunting effect, offers a concert with the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, which will also perform on its own. ♦ June 29 at 7:30: The pianist David Broome performs John Cage's mysterious "Sonatas and Interludes," a landmark of postwar experimentalism, with live film accompaniment. (158 Bleecker St. www.lprnyc.com.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
This able ensemble (featuring the violinist Lisa Shihoten and the violist Max Mandel, among others) gathers to honor the memory of the conductor Jens Nygaard, who had an eccentric passion for obscure Romantic works. In this concert, which features the violinist Xiao-Dong Wang as guest, Borodin's dulcet String Quartet No. 2 will be the anchor for lesser-known *introuvables* by Glazunov, Tchaikovsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov. (Church for All Nations, 417 W. 57th St. 212-799-1259. June 29 at 7:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

ASTON MAGNA
Ebullient works by Bach (the "Wedding Cantata"), Haydn (the String Quartet in D Major, Op. 20, No. 6), and Villa-Lobos open another season offered by the distinguished Boston-based Baroque-music series, led by the violinist Daniel Stepner; the soprano Dominique Labelle is a featured artist. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7887. June 26 at 8. For information about the group's weekend concerts in Great Barrington and Williamstown, Mass., see www.astonmagna.org.)

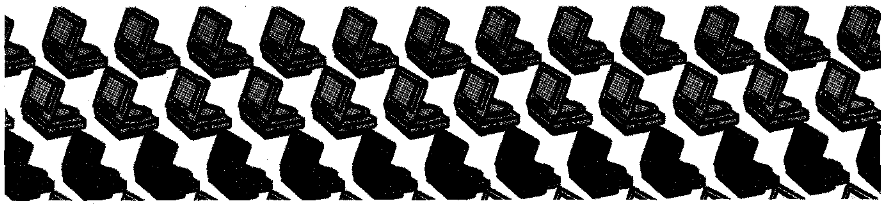
TANGLEWOOD
The new season at Boston's musical duchy begins quietly, as usual, with performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra yet to come. June 26 at 8: The Emerson String Quartet brings its brilliant alacrity to works by Ives, Barber (the "Adagio for Strings"), and Dvořák (the "American" Quartet in F Major and the "American" Quintet, with the violist Paul Neubauer). ♦ June 28 at 2:30: Another redoubtable ensemble, the Juilliard String Quartet, devotes its expertise to four of Haydn's masterful and richly expressive "Sun" Quartets (Op. 20). ♦ June 29 at 8: The eminent conductor Herbert Blomstedt (and a clutch of conducting fellows) leads the superb Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in an all-Sibelius program (including "Tapiola" and the Second Symphony). (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

HUDSON VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC CIRCLE
This brief but notable series, curated by Jaime Laredo and Sharon Robinson, fills the mid-June gap in the concert parade. Its last program this season is offered by the Emerson String Quartet, which performs quartets by Ives, Ravel, and Dvořák (the "American"). (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-339-7907. June 27 at 8.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
This summer, the music of the indomitable American composer-critic Virgil Thomson (whose papers are at Yale) will be the touchstone for the Yale School of Music's summer festival. Susan Narucki, a soprano of clear utterance and limpid tone, begins the series by collaborating with the pianist J. J. Penna in a concert of songs by such composers as Thomson, Jerome Kern, Ned Rorem, and Milton Babbitt. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-524-3000. June 27 at 8.)

CARAMOOR
Westchester's elegant equivalent to Tanglewood will offer African, Hispanic, and jazz music this summer, but the classical repertory remains its main concern. The mezzo-soprano Susan Graham is a stylish addition to the festival's opening-night program with David Robertson and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, singing arias by Mozart in a concert that also includes music by Rossini and Beethoven (the Fifth Symphony). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252. June 27 at 8:30.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
Northeastern Connecticut's summer shrine to the art of the string quartet has entered its eightieth season. Its next concert features the St. Petersburg Quartet (along with the violinist Mark Peskanov and the pianist Doris Stevenson), repeating the Beethoven and Chausson works from its Bargemusic program. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 28 at 3.)



STEVE POWERS

DVD NOTES
GIVE OR TAKE A YEAR

An ingenious collage of archival footage elucidated with a trenchant, sarcastic commentary, the three-hour-long documentary **"A Grin Without a Cat"** (Icarus), by Chris Marker—who credits himself solely with "editing and soundtrack"—suggests that the momentous events of 1968, in France and elsewhere, were merely a follow-up to the crucial uprisings of 1967. Marker, working in 1977 (and revising the film in 1993), downplays the generational and cultural aspect of student protest—the sex, drugs, and rock and roll—in order to ask why the uprisings that broke out in 1967, as well as the many guerrilla movements that were already active, didn't result in actual revolution.

Marker lays blame mainly on orthodox Communist parties for abjuring revolution in the hope of winning power at the ballot box in alliance with "bourgeois" or moderate left-wing parties. Though he admires Che Guevara and other guerrilla leaders, he argues that the indifference of the working class to their struggle turned them into "a spearhead without a spear, a grin without a cat"—actors in guerrilla theatre. Similarly, he claims that, in 1968, restive French workers, whose confrontational 1967 strikes Marker himself filmed, were intimidated by government propaganda into refusing to throw their weight behind protesting students, whose uprising thus petered out.

Michelangelo Antonioni's sole American movie, **"Zabriskie Point"** (Warner), released in 1970, shows, perhaps unintentionally, what scared the workers off. The elegantly schematic story—depicting the younger generation's conjoined cultural and political radicalism, set against the background of the Vietnam War, the draft, and racial strife—starts at a West Coast university where militant students debate their plan of action. When their protest takes place, a policeman is gunned down, and Mark (Mark Frechette), a student wanted for the murder, steals a small airplane and goes on the lam. Landing in the desert, he meets Daria (Daria Halprin), the secretary and mistress of a real-estate developer (Rod Taylor) whose work embodies the urban alienation she is fleeing.

Antonioni's ecstatically photographed landscapes bear most of the film's intellectual weight. A montage of streetside marquees of industrial vulgarity and the developer's repellent plastic simulacra of life invoke the civilization of artifice that the young lovers reject. Their sexual encounter amidst the desert's biomorphic curves and furrows erupts into an orgiastic happening, as if the entire American wilderness were being rededicated in the name of eros. And a stunning, hallucinatory ending of transfiguring violence, in which the objects of conventional leisure and comfort are destroyed with a rapturous serenity, embodies an ideology that kept many working people at a suspicious distance from student radicals.

—*Richard Brody*

MOVIES
OPENING

AFGHAN STAR
Havana Marking directed this documentary, about a televised music competition in Afghanistan. Opening June 26. (Cinema Village.)

CHÉRI
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 26. (In limited release.)

THE HURT LOCKER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 26. (In limited release.)

MY SISTER'S KEEPER
In this drama, directed by Nick Cassavetes, a young girl (Abigail Breslin) finds out that she was conceived in order to be a marrow donor for her terminally ill sister. Co-starring Cameron Diaz. Opening June 26. (In wide release.)

QUIET CHAOS
Antonello Grimaldi directed this drama, about an executive who, after saving the lives of two women, learns that his wife has died unexpectedly. Starring Nanni Moretti, Valeria Golino, and Hippolyte Girardot. Opening June 26. (IFC Center.)

THE STONING OF SORAYA M.
A drama, directed by Cyrus Nowrasteh, about an Iranian woman who witnesses her niece's abusive arranged marriage. Starring Shohreh Aghdashloo, Mozhan Marnò, and James Caviezel. Opening June 26. (In limited release.)

TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN
Michael Bay directed this sequel, about the evil forces that attempt to capture an action hero (Shia LaBeouf). Co-starring Megan Fox and Rainn Wilson. Opening June 24. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

AWAY WE GO
Sam Mendes, working with a script by the husband-and-wife novelists Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida, has created a movie very different in tone from "American Beauty," "Road to Perdition," and "Revolutionary Road," all of which tended to imprison their American characters in restrictive visual schemes. This movie is free and easy, almost ruminative in tone, like something from the early seventies. A loving but unmarried couple in their early thirties, Burt (John Krasinski) and Verona (Maya Rudolph), who is pregnant, struggle to figure out who they are and what they want. They travel around the country in an old Volvo, visiting friends and relatives. The vignettes are both funny and touching. With Allison Janney as a raucous alcoholic who screams at her kids, Maggie Gyllenhaal as a pushy New

Age mother whose virtue saps everyone's strength, and many, many others.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/8 & 15/09.) (In wide release.)

BAMAKO

A different kind of courtroom drama. The tribunal in question, in one family's courtyard in a poor neighborhood in the capital of Mali, has no legal power but plenty of moral authority: its unofficial judges are trying the World Bank and the I.M.F. for their role in Africa's economic and social crises. Like all trials, this one opens the floodgates to rhetorical posturing, but the director, Abderrahmane Sissako, quickly gets past the bluster with careful, canny framings and poignant vignettes of daily life in and around the courtyard. With a light touch, a dry wit, and vast sympathy, he sketches the local ways of birth, death, health, work, art, law, and love—and suggests their painfully frustrating dependence on bureaucratic levers pulled half a world away. In French and Bambara.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; June 27 and June 29.)

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

D. W. Griffith's grand-scale melodrama, from 1915, centered on the Civil War and set mainly in South Carolina, is justly reviled for its overt racism. The director puts a favorable light on antebellum slavery, shows the postwar South in the grips of rapacious, ridiculous, sexually predatory blacks, and depicts the founding and deployment of the Ku Klux Klan (by none other than his hero, a dashing young Confederate officer) as a deliverance. The movie would long have vanished into the ratholes of time were it not for the scope and inventiveness with which Griffith realized it. He modulates spectacular battle scenes (including the phantasmagorical burning of Atlanta) with intimate dramas, and he films his stories from multiple perspectives that, taken together, open the movie up to far more—and more ambiguous—reality than Griffith had intended. A scene of a lynching appears as an absolute, unredeemable horror; the disenfranchisement of black voters as a cruel and criminal injustice. If the bias of Griffith's story is blatantly false, it at least shows, if distortedly, that race is the key divide in the United States. His conception of the cinema as the reflection and living repository of history offered later filmmakers powerful and protean tools with which to do the right thing. Silent.—*R.B.* (MOMA; June 25 and June 27.)

CHÉRI

The enormous broad-brimmed hats and layered silk dresses; the double-lace curtains, velvet coverings, and ubiquitous flowers—all the externals in Stephen Frears's modestly budgeted adaptation of Colette's great novella "Chéri" feel right. The entire movie, even when it's set indoors, seems to be taking place in a bower, but a bower lit as a bedroom is lit when the evening is moving toward its passionate conclusion. And yet the picture doesn't quite come to life. Michelle Pfeiffer is an utterly beautiful woman and a good actress, but Colette is very clear about her courtesan heroine, Léa, as a physical type: at the age of forty-nine, she's plush and rounded, with magnificent shoulders. Pfeiffer, by contrast, is elegant and very slender—a twenty-first-century, much-exercised body lying in a Belle Époque bed. As for the pale and handsome Rupert Friend, he has, as Chéri, the sulky self-absorption that Colette described and that Léa loves (she wants a beautiful boy, not a grown man), but the thin-lipped Friend is so cranky and silly that he's actually somewhat dislikable. Colette's tender irony is that these two rather useless people fall seriously in love, but the casting prevents us from feeling the bittersweet emotions that she evoked. With Kathy Bates as Léa's raucous and envious courtesan friend.—*D.D.* (In limited release.)

DRAG ME TO HELL

As if apologizing for the mess that is "Spider-Man 3," the director Sam Raimi returns to his low-budget horror roots in this playful and relentlessly scary story about a bank clerk (Alison Lohman) who's cursed by an old woman (the aptly named Lorna Raver) after she's denied an extension of her mortgage loan. The film is packed with spooky set pieces that rumble convincingly (the use of wind, shadow, and sound is impeccable), and the over-the-top slimefest makes for a series of hilarious gross-out spectacles. Although more economical storytelling might have given the movie more of a rush at the finish line, it's still a mightily maniacal piece of work.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

FOOD, INC.

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Film Forum.)

THE GIRLFRIEND EXPERIENCE

In Steven Soderbergh's latest low-budget experiment, Chelsea (Sasha Grey), a high-priced call girl, and Chris (Chris Santos), a personal trainer, live together, selling intimacies and friendship to their clients as the city's high-flying financial world begins to collapse (the movie was shot in the fall of 2008). Set in the amber bars and gleaming boutique hotels of lower Manhattan, the movie, written by David Levien and Brian Koppelman, might have worked as a satirical observation of time and place if Sasha Grey seemed even halfway alive, but Grey, a real-life porn star who has intellectual pretensions, comes off as affectless and withdrawn. Soderbergh, giving her closeup after closeup (he shot the film himself), seems to have been mesmerized by her haughty self-regard; he gets nothing out of her. With the film critic Glenn Kenny in an amusing turn as a lecherous guy who grades escort services on the Web, and the writer Mark Jacobson as a reporter interviewing Chelsea. He doesn't get anything out of her either.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

THE HANGOVER

Three friends (Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms, and Zach Galifianakis) have to reconstruct, after an alcohol-induced group memory loss, a wild bachelor party where they lost the groom (Justin Bartha). After waking up in a trashed Las Vegas suite, the three lead characters come across a host of madcap surprises on their way to solving the mystery, and their director (Todd Phillips) has a natural, unfussy style that allows the actors plenty of room to riff energetically through their parts (Cooper is especially good). The movie's episodic nature is not perfect (there's a fey Asian gambler who's the brunt of cheap gags), but what makes this bromance work is the performers' contagious camaraderie. With a sunny Heather Graham sweetening the mix.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

MOON

The first full-length from the British director Duncan Jones stars Sam Rockwell and Sam Rockwell, with a cameo by Sam Rockwell; such is the occupational hazard, perhaps, of any film set in a future where cloning is common practice. Rockwell is among the most lively and affable of current stars: a good thing, too, given the amount of time he spends onscreen, and the loneliness with which he has to contend. He plays Sam, an astronaut who is nearing the end of a three-year stint on the lunar surface, where he manages the mining of Helium-3, a precious substance that will save the planet Earth. On a routine inspection, he crashes his vehicle, and wakes up in the infirmary; from that point on, the film traces the fragmentation of his sanity, his being, and, worst of all, his employment prospects. He is stuck with himself, and so are we. The over-all design is a clear homage to "2001: A Space Odyssey," not just in the soothing tones of the onboard computer—voiced here, with a sliver of menace, by Kevin Spacey—but also in a willingness to disengage from the mechanism of plot and turn instead, as Kubrick did, to the vaporous metaphysics of the otherworldly. Jones, like his hero, has mastered a complex task—but the story he has to tell is lost in space.—*Anthony Lane* (In wide release.)

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: BATTLE OF THE SMITHSONIAN

The plot is nominal. It's barely a premise; it's more like a shelter. Ben Stiller is back together with his beloved stuffed and wax figures and other statues, miniatures, and artifacts—only not at the American Museum of Natural History this time, but in the basement of the Smithsonian (which includes a mockup of the National Gallery). After dark, the figures come to life, and the result is pretty much a free-form traffic jam in which everyone fights everyone else. There is, however, the great Hank Azaria as the wannabe Egyptian pharaoh Kahmunrah. His powerful arms emerging from his battle dress, Azaria, channelling Boris Kar-

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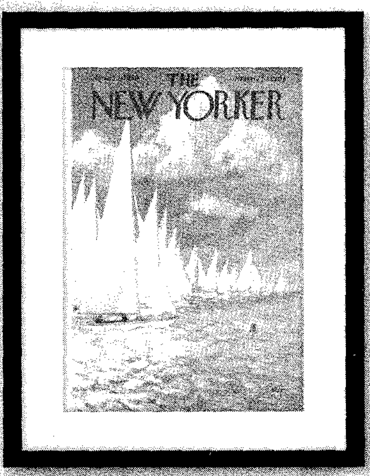

Arthur Getz, 1959

Beach • Picnic • Sailboat

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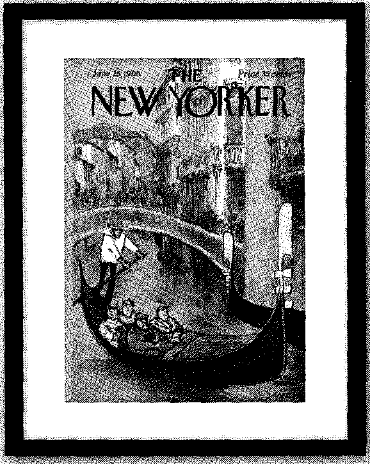

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
UPPER-CLASS MEN

No one who has seen "The Leopard," which screens at BAM on June 30, will forget the ballroom scene, not least the partnering of the beauteous Angelica (Claudia Cardinale) with the Prince of Salina (Burt Lancaster), all grizzled grace.

20TH CENTURY FOX/PHOTOFEST

The dance highlights the proceedings, and confirms our sense of the whole work, set amid the threatened Sicilian aristocracy of the eighteen-sixties, as a stately waltz of tristesse. But there are other, briefer sequences of formidable impact: watch the family picnic, with a white tablecloth unfurled in a landscape as parched as the Holy Land, or the light-footed departure of Tancredi (Alain Delon), the Prince's nephew, as he hurries to join the army of liberal revolt, and you wonder who, if anyone, has bettered the director, Luchino Visconti, in the arrangement of human figures in space. Indeed, his intimate moments, with characters at prayer or at rest, are more vigorous than his oddly tentative battles. Holding it together is Lancaster, every inch the big cat of the title, surveying both mice and men with the wisdom of the doomed.

—*Anthony Lane*

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loff, speaks in a prissy, vaguely English accent, and with a lisp. When people insist on calling his war costume a dress, he becomes agitated. "It's a tunic," Azaria says, irritably shaking his fly-whisk sceptre, or *nekhakha.* "Tunic."—*D.D.* (6/8 & 15/09) (In wide release.)

SÉRAPHINE
One of the loveliest and most sombre fables of a lonely artist's ecstasy. Séraphine Louis (Yolande Moreau), a stolid housekeeper in the old town of Senlis, north of Paris, paints secretly at night in her room. A fastidious German-born art dealer and critic, Wilhelm Uhde (Ulrich Tukur), in retreat from Paris, discovers her before the First World War and champions her work as "modern primitivism." The movie, based on a true story, has been made with great respect for the privacy of this odd pairing, but it doesn't sidestep Uhde's emotional difficulties as a gay man or Séraphine's enthralled immersion in nature, her pride and isolation, and her eventual insanity. The colors are on the sober side; the pace is even, slow, weighted, and very satisfying. The writer-director, Martin Provost, wants us to feel what Séraphine feels when the wind strikes her face. The cinematography is by Laurent Brunet; the movie won seven Césars.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

STAR TREK
A new beginning, of sorts, for a franchise whose vision of the future seemed lost in the past. The director, J. J. Abrams, warps back to the early days not only of Kirk (Chris Pine) and Mr. Spock (Zachary Quinto) but of the U.S.S. Enterprise herself. Kirk overcomes his rebellious streak—signalled very clearly, for the hard of understanding—to take command of the ship as she flames into combat against the spidery craft of Captain Nero (Eric Bana), who has already jump-started the movie by wiping out Kirk's dad. There is no shortage of time-leaps here, including a jumbled subplot about what might have happened, which involves a longish cameo from a cadaverous Leonard Nimoy. (It's unclear whether non-devout viewers will relish his presence, given that Quinto does such a serene and thoughtful job.) The action scarcely halts for breath, let alone for common sense, and the scene of a ship-to-planet free fall already ranks among the treasures of the headlong; what the movie gains in ardor and cockiness, however, it loses in charm, and the result is much easier to gawp at than to love. With Bruce Greenwood, the nimble-witted Simon Pegg (in the role of Scotty), and a graying Winona Ryder as Spock's mother—how old does that make you feel?—*A.L.* (5/18/09) (In wide release.)

SUMMER HOURS
A woman in her seventies (Edith Scob), the niece and possibly the lover of a deceased French painter, dies in her home outside Paris, and her three adult children, who grew up there, have to decide what to do with the house, the Art Nouveau furniture, and the paintings by Corot and other artists which they have always lived with. Two of the children, riding the surf of global capitalism, have made lives elsewhere. Watching Olivier Assayas's new film, we realize pretty quickly that the house is France itself—cultivated, beautiful, but powerless in the global era. But what will happen if the house is sold, the collection given to the Musée d'Orsay, the memories dissipated? Is it a tragedy? In the end, Assayas, shooting the film with relaxed, flowing camera movements, gives his love not to objects but to the disorderly life out of which art is made. With Charles Berling, Jérémie Renier, and Juliette Binoche, as the three children. In French.—*D.D.* (5/25/09) (In limited release.)

THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1 2 3
For the fourth time, the director Tony Scott teams up with Denzel Washington—a conjunction that has already brought us "Crimson Tide," "Man on Fire," and the fragrant "Déjà Vu." As pairings go, it's not quite up there with Ingmar Bergman and Liv Ullmann, but there's still time. Washington, playing a dispatcher on the New York subway system, finds himself negotiating with a hijacker (John Travolta) who has taken over a train and is now demanding a ransom (a paltry ten million bucks, which tells you that a twist is on the way). The dispatcher, having started out as a klutz so ordinary that he wears a tie and a sleeveless sweater, morphs into an action hero, which is just one of a cluster of wild implausibilities that crowd out the cogency of the film. The framing and editing will be familiar from a thousand music videos, whereas the motions of colliding police cars—as seen during a wild ride through the city—will be unfamiliar to anyone versed in the laws of physics. There was an earlier version, in 1974, with Walter Matthau and Robert Shaw. They looked embedded in their grimy, downbeat roles, whereas the stars of Scott's film seem to be fooling with the whole setup; they know it's a joke, and they want us to know it, too. With James Gandolfini as the mayor of New York.—*A.L.* (6/22/09) (In wide release.)

TERMINATOR SALVATION
The title is unfortunate, giving the impression—which is more than borne out by the film—that something must be done to save the franchise. The rescue attempt is hindered, not helped, by the efforts of the director, McG, and his writers, John D. Brancato and Michael Ferris, all of whom, together with the star, Christian Bale, assume that the project is one of the utmost solemnity; anything approaching a laugh, or even fun, is gunned down without remorse. Bale plays John Connor, the leader of the human resistance against the wicked techno-reign of Skynet. Other fighters include Connor's father (Anton Yelchin), a resurrected killer from the past (Sam Worthington), and a child sidekick (Jadagrace) who is cute, mute, and of no use whatsoever to the plot. Bryce Dallas Howard plays Connor's pregnant squeeze, thus adding to the list of roles that waste her bewitching skills. As with the previous film in the series, the one engaging scene is a chase involving high speeds and heavy machinery; the rest of the tale is a slog, and even the Terminators look as if they could do with a fresh set of batteries and an oil check. With a brief cameo by a C.G.I. version of Arnold Schwarzenegger; or maybe this *is* him, and the virtual one is governing California.—*A.L.* (6/1/09) (In wide release.)

TETRO
Francis Ford Coppola's intense personal investment in the subject of this drama, set in Argentina, is its strength as well as its big problem. He clearly cares deeply about the title character (Vincent Gallo), a writer living in Buenos Aires, who had been the darling, and is now the whipping boy, of a dominant local critic. Tetro's girlfriend says he's "like a genius but without enough accomplishments," and he has settled into a freewheeling but unsatisfying routine of bohemian turmoil. The arrival of his long-lost younger brother, Benny (Alden Ehrenreich, a pale and determined young man reminiscent of Leonardo DiCaprio), conjures up the bad memories of earlier family life that caused Tetro to travel far and refuse contact. But the emergence of dark secrets goes hand in hand with an artistic breakthrough, a triumphant comeback, emotional healing, and family reconciliation. The element of wish fulfillment is inescapable: Coppola-the-director's intense emotional command of actors and scenes is overwhelmed by Coppola-the-writer's dictates, which are both closed off to outer reality and deal all too obliquely, allusively, and selectively with the filmmaker's own identity and history. The result is a work that is both frustratingly hermetic and strangely impersonal. In English and Spanish.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

UP
A grouchy old guy, Carl Fredricksen (voiced by Ed Asner), balloons attached to his house, flies off to the South American wilderness, with an unwanted stowaway aboard—a little round-faced chubby Wilderness Explorer in shorts, Russell (Jordan Nagai), who is afraid of nothing. This animated comedy from Pixar is being distributed in both 2D and 3D versions; the third dimension adds palpability to the characters. Carl has a square, blocky head and a blocky body; the boy has a circular face with a bump for nose. Neither of them is very big, but they look solid, weighted. When the characters fly through their air, the space becomes an actual medium, not a dead zone. The team of Pete Docter and Bob Peterson, who wrote and directed, keep their eye on the story and on the bond between the old man and the boy. For them, 3D is a narrative tool, a delightful enhancement of what had to be strong to begin with, or it wouldn't work. Warmly emotional, the movie is also filled with inexplicably funny jokes. A complete triumph, even an instant classic.—*D.D.* (6/8 & 15/09) (In wide release.)

WHATEVER WORKS
The new Woody Allen film stars Larry David as Boris Yellnikoff, an irate New Yorker who once had a beautiful wife and a serious reputation as a physicist. (Or

so he tells us, talking straight to the camera.) Now he has a lousy apartment, no job—unless you count chess tutoring—and nobody to share his life except for a few cronies. How that downfall came about would have made an engaging story in itself, but Allen passes it by, preferring to focus on the sweet, tractable, and altogether fantastical Southern teenager (Evan Rachel Wood) whom Boris finds sheltering on his doorstep, takes reluctant pity on, and weds. We half-expect her to change his ways, but the grumpiness in Boris runs deep; instead, we follow her path into infidelity, as well as the arrival of her despairing parents (Patricia Clarkson and Ed Begley, Jr.) to the city. The movie is nimble enough at tracking their various transformations—Clarkson is the best thing in the film, a gust of bright colors and comic verve—but, even as the script makes fun of the out-of-towners, there is something stiff and encrusted about its own assumptions. There was a time when the half-happy ending of an Allen movie felt stirring and hard-earned, but the collective felicity that descends at the end of this project is more of a flimsy dream.—*A.L.* (6/22/09) (In wide release.)

THE WINDMILL MOVIE

The filmmaker and teacher Richard Rogers worked for decades on a film about himself—in particular, about his frustrations with his upper-class Wasp family, as well as with himself, for not having become as successful a filmmaker—or family man—as he wanted to be. Rogers died in 2001, and his widow, the photographer Susan Meiselas, asked Alexander Olch, one of his former students, to go through the two hundred hours of footage and see what could be made of it. The resulting act of devotion, loyalty, and love yielded a film as warmhearted and unequivocal—and undemanding and unquestioning—as a eulogy. Olch fills out Rogers's self-portrait by writing and delivering a voice-over from the perspective of Rogers, which contrasts sadly with Rogers's own lucid and poignant voice. Rogers's artistic self-criticism was painfully accurate, but he persevered valiantly nonetheless; he recognized his need to escape his family but remained tethered to it anyway. Olch never gets past the surface of the story; his affectionate fealty is a sort of emotional blackmail. This story demands a level of insight—or of candor—beyond what Olch displays.—*R.B.* (Film Forum.)

ZULU

The writer-director Cy Endfield's terrifying, sobering, and exhilarating account of the hundred and thirty-nine British soldiers who, in 1879, defended the missionary station of Rorke's Drift, Natal, against roughly four thousand Zulu warriors is a martial spectacle like no other. Endfield may have conceived the film as the British Empire version of an American frontier Western, but his response to the material gave the finished production a look—and, just as important, a sound—all its own. The swooping camera movements convey the speed and massed strength of a Zulu army on the march, while on the soundtrack, the rhythmically pounding feet sound like chugging locomotives. Endfield does equally well with the redcoats in the foreground, including Stanley Baker (who co-produced) as the pragmatic, unaffected Royal Engineer who takes charge of the siege, and Michael Caine, in his film début, as the aristocratic officer who, despite his foppish façade, displays surprising grace under pressure. The final sweep of the camera takes in the men who won the Victoria Cross and ends with Baker thrusting the tip of a shield into the ground, as if he's planting an exclamation point on the whole adventure. Released in 1964.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; June 24.)

Also Playing

BETTY BLUE: Cinema Village. **DEAD SNOW:** In limited release. **THE PROPOSAL:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Essential Cinema." June 24 at 7:30: "Mother" (1926, Vsevolod I. Pudovkin; in Russian with no subtitles; English synopsis available). ♦ June 25 at 7: "Walden" (1969, Jonas Mekas). ♦ June 25 at 7:30 and June 28 at 6 and 8: "Sunrise" (1927, F. W. Murnau; silent). ♦ June 27 at 5:30: Short-film program, including "Chumlum" (1964, Ron Rice). ♦ June 28 at 5: "Senseless" (1962, Rice) and "Flower Thief" (1960, Rice). ♦ Special screenings. June 28 at 7:30: "Money" (1984, Henry Hills) and "Little Lieutenant" (1994, Hills), introduced by the director. ♦ June 26 at 7:30: Films by Sarah Pucill, including "You Be Mother" (1990), introduced by the director. ♦ June 27 at 7:30: Films by Pucill, including "Mirrored Measure" (1996), introduced by the director.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through July 2: "BAMCinemaFEST." June 24 at 6:30: "Brock Enright: Good Times Will Never Be the Same" (2009, Jody Lee Lipes). ♦ June 24 at 9:30: "Sorry, Thanks" (2009, Dia Sokol). ♦ June 25 at 6:30: "The Exploding Girl" (2009, Bradley Rust Gray). ♦ June 25 at 9: "William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe" (2009, Sarah and Emily Kunstler). ♦ June 25 at 9:30: "The Square" (2009, Nash Edgerton). ♦ June 27 at 5:30 and 9: "Metropolis" (1927, Fritz Lang), featuring a live performance by 3epkano. ♦ June 27 at 9: "What's on Your Plate?" (2009, Catherine Gund). ♦ June 29 at 7:30: "Marketa Lazarová" (1967, Frantisek Vlácil; in Czech). ♦ June 30 at 6:15: "Sisters" (2006, Marco Bellocchio; in Italian). ♦ June 30 at 8: "The Leopard" (1963, Luchino Visconti).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 24-25 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "Brighton Rock" (1947, John Boulting). ♦ June 26-July 2 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "10 Rillington Place" (1971, Richard Fleischer).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—"The Secret Policeman's Film Festival." June 26 at 2 and June 27 at 4:30: "Pleasure at Her Majesty's" (1976, Roger Graef and Jonathan Miller) and "The Mermaid Frolics" (1977, Graef). ♦ June 26 at 9:30 and June 29 at 7: "Remember the Secret Policeman's Ball?" (2004, Margaret Kinmonth) and "The Secret Policeman Rocks" (2009). ♦ June 27 at 1: "Human Rights Now!" (1988, Larry Jordan). ♦ June 27 at 8 and June 30 at 2:30: "The Secret Policeman's Ball" (1980, Roger Graef) and "The Secret Policeman's Other Ball" (1982, Julien Temple and John Cleese). ♦ June 28 at 12 and 6: "Conspiracy of Hope" (1986). ♦ June 29 at 3 and June 30 at 7: "The Paris Concert for Amnesty International 1998" (Stanley Dorfman).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

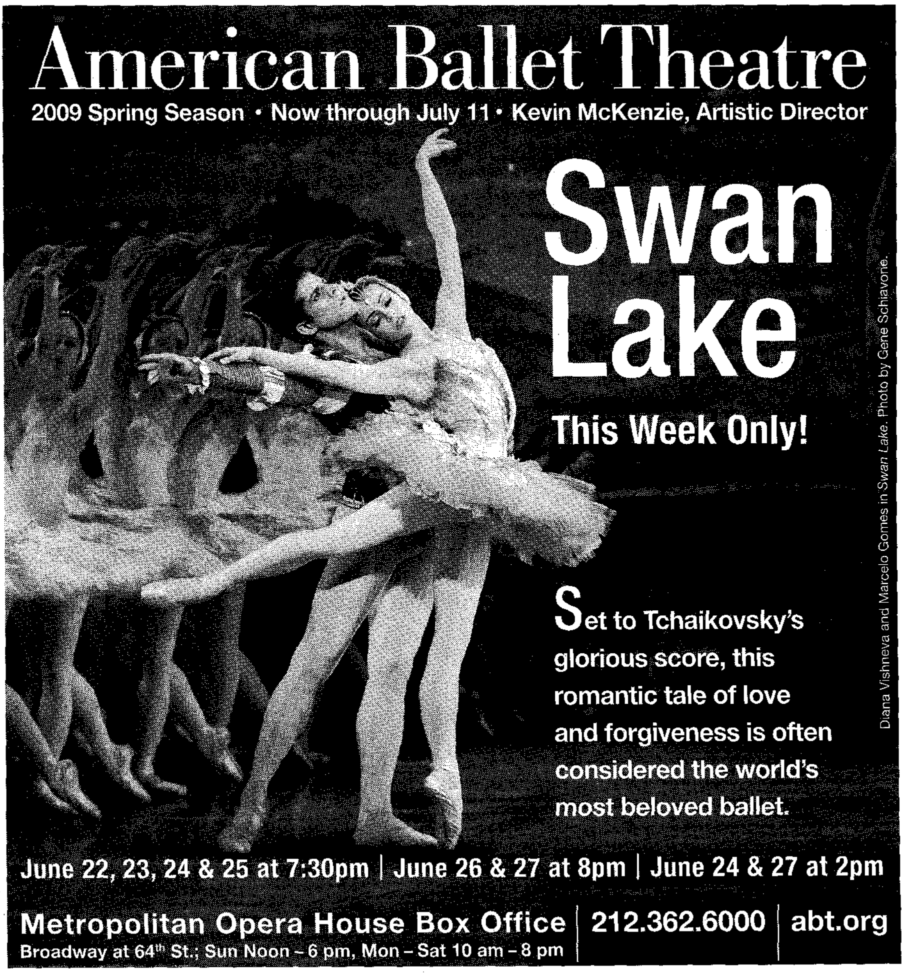
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Michel Piccoli. June 30 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Les Créatures" (1966, Agnès Varda; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." June 26-27: "The Killing" (1956, Stanley Kubrick).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"The Old West: Myth, Character, and Reinvention." June 24-26 at 1:30: "Lupe" (1966, Andy Warhol). ♦ "The Sixties: Yanks in Britain." June 24 at 4:30: "Zulu" (†). ♦ June 24 at 8: "Dr. Strangelove; or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" (1964, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Special screenings. June 24-26 at 7, June 27 at 4, and June 28 at 5: "Rebirth of a Nation" (2008, Paul D. Miller). ♦ June 25 at 4:30 and June 27 at 1:15: "The Birth of a Nation" (†). ♦ The films of Abderrahmane Sissako. June 26 at 8 and June 29 at 4:30: "Waiting for Happiness" (2002; in French, Hassani, and Mandarin). ♦ June 27 at 5:15 and June 29 at 8: "Bamako" (†). ♦ June 27 at 8: "Sabriya" (1997; in Arabic) and "Life on Earth" (1998; in French and Bambara). ♦ June 28



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Diana Vishneva and Marcelo Gomes in *Swan Lake*. Photo by Gene Schiavone.

at 2:30: "Le Jeu" (1990; in Hassani) and "October" (1992; in Russian).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." June 26 at 9:30: "Gaslight" (1944, George Cukor).

READINGS AND TALKS

"DELHI NOIR"
Akashic Books celebrates the publication of the latest addition to its Noir Series with two events. On June 24 at 6:30, the editor of the new anthology, Hirsh Sawhney, is joined by the contributors Meera Nair and Mohan Sikka and the translator Jason Grunebaum at the Mysterious Bookshop. (58 Warren St. No tickets necessary.) The following night, at 7, the group reconvenes at Idlewild Books. (12 W. 19th St. No tickets necessary.)

KGB BAR
Dorothy Spears, the editor of the new anthology "Flight Patterns: A Century of Stories About Flying," joins the contributors Thomas Beller and Saïd Sayrafiezadeh for a reading from the book. (85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary. June 24 at 7.)

"POETRY FROM THE ROOFTOPS"
The Academy of American Poets' annual summer reading series presents Ching-In Chen, Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon, and Daniel Tobin. (The rooftop of the Arsenal Building in Central Park, Fifth Ave. at 64th St. For more information, visit www.poets.org. June 25 at 6:30.)

"MAD. SQ. READS"
Michael Gross reads from his latest book, "Rogues' Gallery: The Secret History of the Moguls and the Money That Made the Metropolitan Museum." He'll be joined by William Cohan, who will offer selections from his latest work, about the fall of Bear Stearns, "House of Cards: A Tale of Hubris and Wretched Excess on Wall Street." (Madison Square Park, Madison Ave. at 25th St. For more information, visit www.madisonsquarepark.org. June 25 at 6:30.)

BARNES & NOBLE
Ben Greenman, an editor at this magazine, talks about his new novel, "Please Step Back," with Todd Zuniga, the founder of *Opium* magazine. (97 Warren St. No tickets necessary. June 29 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"TUESDAYS ON THE TERRACE"
The Dia Art Foundation is organizing events on the Hispanic Society of America's Audubon Terrace during June and July. On June 30 at 7, it brings in the poet Eileen Myles, who will be presenting a site-specific work titled "The Collection of Silence." Myles and other poets, along with dancers, an opera singer, a life-drawing class, and local elementary-school students, will be celebrating and demonstrating the power of silence. (Broadway between 155th and 156th Sts. For more information, visit www.diaart.org.)

"CIRCUS SUNDAYS"
The Waterfront Museum and Showboat Barge, a refurbished 1914 Lehigh Valley Railroad barge in Red Hook, Brooklyn, presents jugglers, magicians, and other refugees from the big top. (Sundays in June at 1 and 4. For more information, visit www.waterfrontmuseum.org.)

"THE EDIBLE GARDEN"
The New York Botanical Garden's celebration of homegrown treats gets under way with a local-food festival on June 27-28. It includes a talk by Dan Barber (who recently cooked for the Obamas), cooking demonstrations by Martha Stewart and other noted chefs, and many other activities. (Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx. 718-817-8700.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
This week, **Christie's** is holding an auction that Friar Laurence would love, devoted to botanical books that date back to the fifteenth century (June 24). The lots include collections of flower illustrations and compendiums of medicinal herbs, including cures for infertility, dysentery, and, of course, madness. The sale is followed in the afternoon by a more general auction of books and manuscripts, featuring an early broadside printing of the Declaration of Independence and a map of Mount Vernon drawn by George Washington, back when independence was but a glimmer in his eye (sometime before 1769). Decorators and desperate apartment dwellers looking for extraordinary items at less than extraordinary prices can try their luck at the house's two-day "Interiors" auction (June 30-July 1). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ More books go on the auction block at **Bloomsbury's** final sale of the season (June 30). (6 W. 48th St. 212-719-1000.)

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The films of Nicholas Ray, at Film Forum.

TARA HARDY

ON THE HORIZON

DANCE
OLD IS NEW
July 9-12

Bard SummerScape opens with a restoration of Lucinda Childs's seminal postmodern work from 1979, "Dance." The original score by Philip Glass has been remastered by Michael Reisman, the music director of the Philip Glass Ensemble, and the black-and-white film by Sol LeWitt has been digitized, not reshot, so the nine current dancers move against footage of their predecessors. (845-758-7900.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
ENCHANTED EVENING
July 13

The Metropolitan Opera is mounting an impressive fall season, but its summer offerings are decidedly more trim. Among the most attractive is a free recital at Central Park Summerstage that features the magnetic young baritone Paulo Szot, currently starring in "South Pacific" on Broadway. (www.metopera.org/parks.)

MOVIES
IN THE TIME OF NICK
July 17-Aug. 6

The melodramas that Nicholas Ray made in the nineteen-forties and fifties conjure a deeply personal and painful universe of brilliant outsiders caught in a web of emotional conflicts. Film Forum kicks off a retrospective of his work with a weeklong run of "In a Lonely Place," starring Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Grahame. (212-727-8110.)

ART
REVOLUTION ERA
July 22-Oct. 18

During the sixties and seventies, Emory Douglas was the Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party. The New Museum will exhibit more than a hundred and fifty posters, newspapers, and prints designed by Douglas between 1967 and 1976. (212-219-1222.)

NIGHT LIFE
BETTER RECEPTION
Aug. 11

It was raining during TV on the Radio's recent Central Park outing, but the local indie-rock phenomenon heads to Prospect Park later this summer for another alfresco show, this time to benefit Celebrate Brooklyn! (800-745-3000.)

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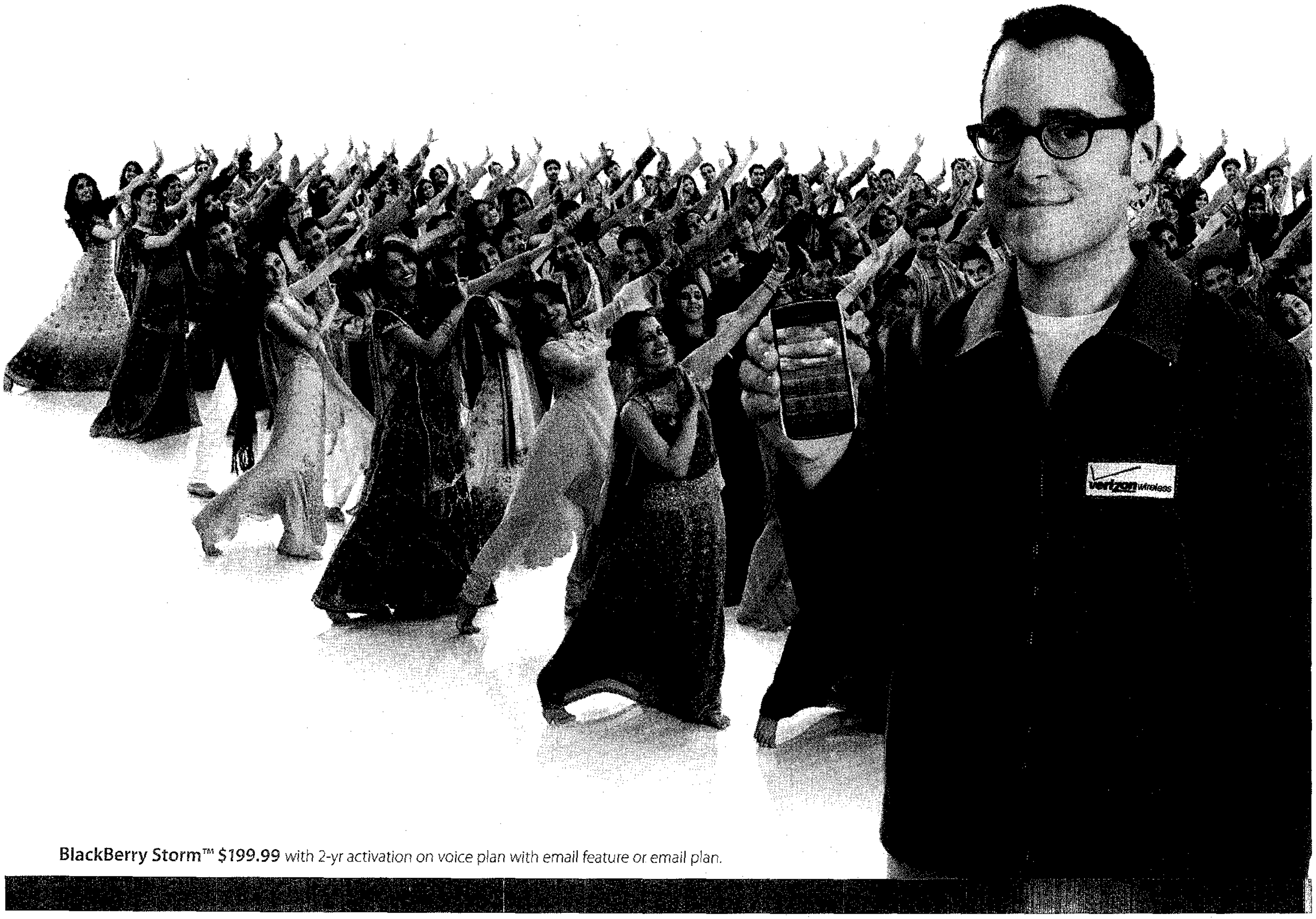

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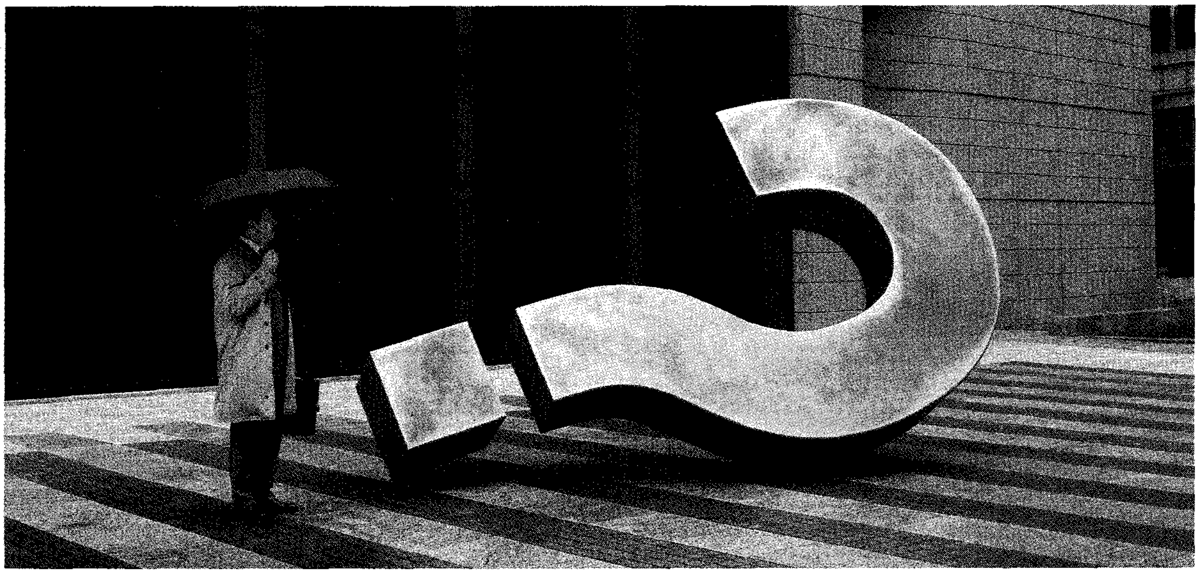

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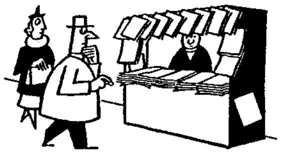
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

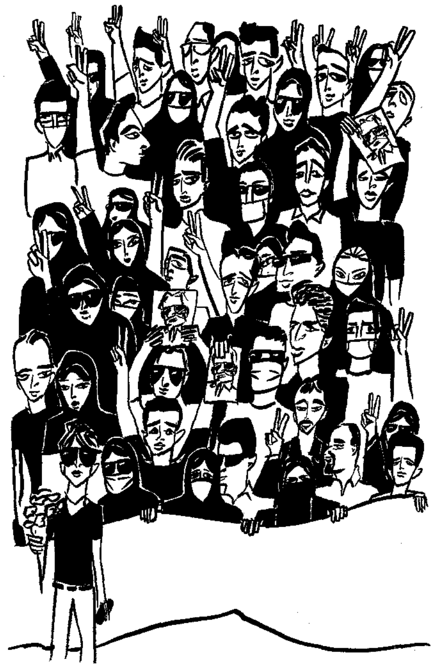
COMMENT
PROTEST VOTE



More than a hundred Iranian reformists have been arrested in the turmoil following Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's hastily declared victory in the June 12th Presidential election. Among them is Saeed Hajjarian, who had been a political consultant to former President Mohammad Khatami. In 2000, Hajjarian was shot in the face by an assassin who was widely believed to have been in the employ of the intelligence ministry. Hajjarian had once been a high official in the intelligence apparatus, and he was suspected of being the source of stories in a reformist newspaper tying the ministry to the grisly murders of dissidents. He survived the shooting, but was left partially paralyzed and is dependent on the constant care of doctors and family. He speaks with difficulty, and his office in the reformist-party headquarters contains a hospital bed. His doctor says that keeping him in detention without proper medical care could endanger his life.

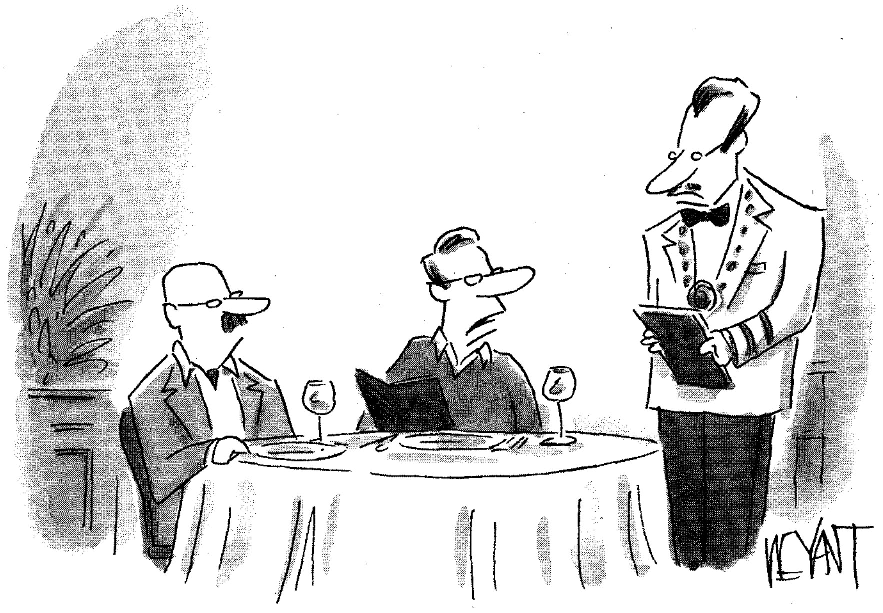
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

It is not a good sign when a government feels the need to imprison even the dissidents it has already shot. But the skies are full of ominous signs for Iran's protest movement. In a sermon at Friday prayers last week, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, defied any expectation that he might reverse course and call a new election under neutral monitors; instead, he demanded an end to the street protests and threatened their leaders with reprisals. The speech was surprising only in the light of the giddy, contagious hope that had risen from the sight of a long-suppressed citizenry's refusal to be cowed. As one Iranian-American observer put it, using an indelicate Iranian expression, the leader has a saw in his posterior: he can't go forward and he can't go back. Unfortunately, even to hold still looks excruciating, most of all for the protesters at the wrong end of the batons, knives, and firearms of the Revolutionary Guards' special forces.



Mir-Hossein Moussavi, the Presidential contender whose legions of supporters have taken to the streets of Iranian cities, has a long and complex history with Khamenei. When Moussavi was Prime Minister, in the nineteen-eighties, he belonged to a faction known as the Islamic Left. It shared power with a rival faction, the Islamic Right, led by Khamenei, who was then the President. When Moussavi and Khamenei clashed, as they often did, the charismatic leader of the Islamic Revolution and the supreme leader of the country, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, intervened—most frequently on Moussavi's side.

So, in 1989, when Khomeini died and Khamenei replaced him as supreme leader, the Islamic Left was exiled to political purgatory. Moussavi did not lift his head in Iranian politics for twenty years. But during those years the rest of his Islamic Left faction, including Saeed Hajjarian, made one of the most dramatic turnabouts in Iran's political history. It abandoned its hard-line commitments in favor of an agenda of liberalization, freedom of expression, the relaxation of Islamic social codes, and friendlier dealings with the world. On the strength of this platform, in 1997, Khatami, who had been Moussavi's minister of culture, won the Presidency in a landslide. Parliament soon fell to the reformists, too. Although these elected officials were subordinate to Khamenei, Hajjarian believed that they could extend their reach by triangulating between the mass movement they repre-



"Do you have any California wines that support same-sex marriage?"

• •

sented and the autocratic state with which they shared power. He coined the phrase that would define the reformists' strategy: "Pressure from below, negotiation at the top."

That strategy failed. The pressure from below was for far-reaching democratic reform, which Khatami could not deliver within the confines of the constitution. Moreover, the authorities at the top were not interested in negotiating. A hundred independent newspapers and magazines opened, only to be forced to close; the Guardian Council vetoed much of the legislation passed by the parliament; and Khatami could not keep his inner circle out of prison, let alone the young people whose votes had won him the Presidency. By the time he left office, in 2005, the reformists had neither a credible leader nor a constituency. Activists and public figures called for a boycott of that year's election. What good was voting if a President with a broad popular mandate could still be controlled and stymied by unelected powers? What difference did it even make who was President?

A major one, as it turned out. Under Ahmadinejad, a crackdown on dissent forced scores of journalists, intellectuals, and activists to flee the country. Ahmadinejad centralized government, empowered the Basij militia and the Revolutionary Guards, flouted expert economic advice, and packed the ministries with ideological cronies. With few reformists permitted to run in the interim elections of 2006 and 2008, liberals and moderates had little recourse inside the political system. Iran seemed headed for a confrontation between irreconcilables: the forces for secular democracy and those for autocratic theocracy.

"Reform is dead, long live reform"—that is another of Saeed Hajjarian's favorite sayings. This spring, the reform movement looked deader than ever. Moussavi, its leading Presidential candidate, was a cipher. But some reformists were encouraged by his long rivalry with Khamenei, which they felt would make him a powerful and fearless advocate for his constituency, a role Khatami never undertook. Although Khatami's party endorsed Moussavi, he described himself as independent, and assured voters that he believed in the principles of the Islamic Revolution. And yet, in a breathtaking, even inexplicable development, the Moussavi campaign produced a "green wave." Perhaps all that voter apathy since 2005 masked a deeper, embarrassed hope. Or was it despair that had liberated Iranians to be pragmatic—to resign themselves to the longevity of the system and to set modest, achievable goals, like the repudiation of Ahmadinejad?

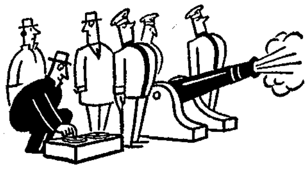
Whatever its origins, the Moussavi wave has coalesced with extraordinary speed into a disciplined, tactically sophisticated, and strikingly moderate movement. The protesters are not directly challenging Khamenei, or the constitution that allows him nearly unlimited power, despite the widely shared impression that his hand is behind the apparent manipulation of the election results and the crackdown that has followed. Instead, they are demanding that their votes be counted and, numbers permitting, that they be allowed to elect the candidate of their choice, from among the few whom Khamenei's Guardian Council had preapproved to run for office. In effect, they insist that the path of legal, internal reform be kept open. Whether this unity and singularity of purpose will survive depends partly on Moussavi's leadership, and partly on how much pressure Khamenei brings to bear.

Count our votes: the modesty of this demand is particularly moving, set against the majesty of the demonstrations. Under the Islamic Republic, public spaces are surveilled for adherence to the dress code and Islamic morality, for suspicious gatherings and raucous laughter, for trespasses that take even their perpetrators by surprise. For those with secrets to hide, the streets are full of eavesdroppers. But now, for once, life as it pulses in the sanctuary of Iranian homes has burst onto the streets. The scale of the crowds is remarkable, as is their confidence, which seems to grow with each day that the protests are not met with overwhelming violence.

But of the two sides in this confrontation only one has an army of special forces, known as white shirts, willing to extract a price for defiance in blood. There is something vertiginous now about the display of all that courage under the lengthening shadow of Tiananmen Square, in a nation whose government has long appeared to view China's as a model. President Obama has so far struck the right notes by upholding the human and civil rights of the protesters without interfering in Iran's internal politics. But a bigger showdown is coming. If the Islamic Republic dares to mow down those ebullient crowds, it will write itself a villainous chapter in history and offend the conscience of the world.

—*Laura Secor*

OVER THERE
BLAM



In the winter of 2004, Jonathan Pieslak, a composer and an associate professor of music at City College, was researching a paper on heavy metal when he stumbled on a Web site devoted to the death-metal band Slayer. (Their songs include "The Antichrist," "Mandatory Suicide," and one, written from the perspective of a terrorist, called "Jihad": "Fuck your God erase his name / A lady weeps insane with sorrow.") On the site, a fan had written that, during the Gulf War, the band received forty per cent of its fan mail from soldiers in the Middle East. The claim turned out to be an exaggeration, but Pieslak became interested. In April, Indiana University Press published his book "Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War," which examines the role of music in military recruiting, combat, interrogations, and morale, and explains many things about Slayer's appeal.

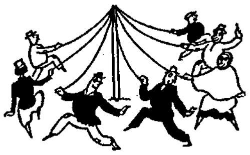
First of all: listening to heavy metal, with its double-pedal bass drums and tremolo-style guitars, Pieslak writes, is a good way to prepare mentally for a mission, because it "sounds considerably like the consistent discharge of bullets fired from an automatic gun." Colby Buzzell, an M240 Bravo machine gunner who did a yearlong tour in Iraq, told Pieslak, "I'd listen to Slayer to get all into it." Once, Buzzell said, a guy on his patrol rigged up his MP3 player to a Humvee, and the patrol blasted theme songs from old movies—a modern-day drum-and-fife brigade. He said, "Sometimes your motivation is down and you're like, 'I don't want to play soldier today.' . . . But then you hear 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly' theme song and you're like, 'Fuck yeah, hell yeah, I'll go out on a mission today.' " For some in the Fourth Infantry Division, Lil Jon's "I Don't Give a Fuck" was an anthem—soldiers called it their "getting crunked" song, and they would chant its refrain until they were ready to leave the base.

At the Borders store in the Time Warner Center on a recent afternoon, Pieslak said that in another unit "Metallica was the group of choice. Then, when they got to Falluja, it switched to 'Go to Sleep,' by Eminem: 'Die, motherfucker, die! / Unh, time's up, bitch, close ya eyes.' " Pieslak, wearing Pumas, a T-shirt, and camouflage cargo shorts (no significance—just "what was clean"), had agreed to poke around the music section. Passing Classic Crooners, New Age, and Jazz ("You're probably not going to see too many guys over there with George Winston CDs," he said), he led the way to Rock, where he riffled through the "D"s. Dropkick Murphys. Drowning Pool. "Their song 'Bodies' is interesting," he said, pulling out a CD that featured a woman holding a hand across her face, the word "SINNER" written across her knuckles. "It kept popping up." Soldiers would use it both to get pumped up for battle and "to induce irritation and frustration among detainees." (The detainees, apparently, preferred 'N Sync and Michael Jackson.) Pieslak said that a group of soldiers had made a music video in which they set their own footage and photographs to the song. They called it "Taliban Bodies." A pair of Arkansas National Guardsmen, Pieslak writes, recorded an album in Iraq. One track, with apologies to Jimmy Buffett, was called "Mortaritaville": "Wasted away again in Baghdad / One weekend a month, yeah, my ass / I'd like to kick my recruiter straight square in the teeth / But I know, 'It's my own damn fault.' "

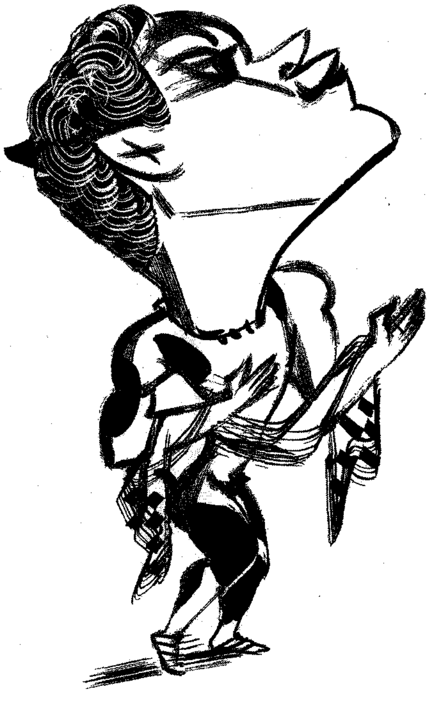
Music, Pieslak writes, has always been a part of the military experience, from training cadences ("Soldier, Soldier Have You Heard") to battle cries (Joshua's trumpets, "Hakkaa päälle") and "thunder runs," in which troops descend in force upon a given area (in Baghdad, one team blasted Wagner, in homage to "Apocalypse Now"). In the book's fourth chapter, "Music as a Psychological Tactic," Pieslak examines a "sonic battle" between American troops—who blasted "Welcome to the Jungle," by Guns N' Roses, and "Hell's Bells," by AC/DC—and Iraqi mullahs, who tried to drown out the metal with chants of "*Allahu Akbar*" and Arabic music. Standing near the "J"s, he said, "Plato thought that different musical scales could have different effects on the human condition. We tend to have a misconception about music—that it is this thing that delights the senses, elevates the spirit. While I like that idea, it is only part of what music has been."

—*Lauren Collins*

FOOL'S GOLD DEPT.
THE FAUN



Many of the makers of early-twentieth-century dance distrusted film; they thought that it made their art look toylike, foolish. As a result, there is no footage, for example, of Vaslav Nijinsky, who may have been the greatest dancer of the century. The fact that his career was so short—he went mad at twenty-nine—makes this void more painful. Couldn't we have had even a glimpse?



Vaslav Nijinsky

Strange to say, we were recently offered one. Last July, a YouTube user posted what he called a film fragment of Nijinsky in his 1912 ballet "The Afternoon of a Faun." Since then, the same source has added three more clips of the Russian dancer in "Faun," plus one each of him in "The Spectre of the Rose," "Scheherazade," "The Blue God," and "Les Orientales." The eight segments add up to about three minutes.

These ballets are all Nijinsky vehicles from the early, fabled, took-Paris-by-storm period of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Most of them were hits, but none of them, today, are as important as "The Afternoon of a Faun," the first ballet that Nijinsky choreographed and the only ballet of his that survives. In it, a little woodland creature (Nijinsky) spies a nymph bathing in a stream, chases her, catches her, loses her, and then consoles himself with her scarf. The ballet immediately became famous (indeed, notorious—*Le Figaro* denounced it as "filthy and bestial"), and in 1912 the fashion photographer Adolf de Meyer made a long, almost measure-by-measure record of it. Those gorgeous stills, because they were published in a book, were stamped on the brains of people who cared about Nijinsky. Now, suddenly, on YouTube, here they were again, except moving! It was like watching Atlantis rise from the sea.

And then, after a minute or so, it wasn't. Weren't these frames *too* close to the de Meyer photographs? Why was the camera moving in and out, a technique unknown in 1912?

Because, it turns out, these aren't films. They are computer-generated artifacts, made by Christian Comte, a French artist who has a studio in Cannes. Reached the other day, Comte acknowledged his authorship. "These films are animations of photographs, achieved thanks to a process that I invented," he said. "I work as an alchemist in animated cinema." He uses still photographs and, by employing a computer to alter them—tilt a head, move an arm—fills in the gaps between successive shots. That's why his "Faun" footage is so much longer than his other footage. He had all those de Meyer stills. This is basically no different from the way Steven Spielberg got the dinosaurs to run around the jungle in "Jurassic Park."

Comte insists that he is not trying to pass off his Nijinsky clips as authentic films. His YouTube profile page opens with a statement that it is a "mad legend" that any film of Nijinsky dancing survives. Yet he goes on to call his postings "film fragments." All of them display the date of each ballet's première—1910, 1911, or 1912—but they do not explain that this is not also the date of the video.

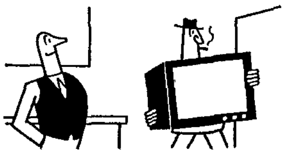
The comments on YouTube suggest that viewers are interpreting Comte's prevarications whichever way they want. Some people kiss Comte's hands for unearthing, at last, footage of Nijinsky dancing: "Astonishing." "*C'est superbe!*" Others reproach him for perpetrating a fraud: "It is a disservice to the arts world to present this digital creation as a genuine film of Nijinsky. Please stop this charade." And then there is a third group—the postmodernists, let's call them—who know that Comte's postings are fake but like them anyway and see no shame in them. "Play your magic," a viewer writes to Comte. "That's Art as well."

For many, Nijinsky is not so much a dancer as an icon: of the misunderstood artist, of the mad genius, of the sacrificial homosexual. (He was Diaghilev's lover.) People will take just about anything they can get of him. They want gold, but fool's gold is O.K., too.

—*Joan Acocella*

THE ACADEMY

A LITTLE TO THE LEFT



Notre Dame had President Obama, N.Y.U. had Hillary Clinton, but for their final lecture before summer the students at Mover University, a training school run by FlatRate moving company, in the Bronx, had the same kind of speaker they always have: an experienced mover. To be fair, this wasn't really a commencement, as Jon Katz, the company's chief marketing officer, explained: classes in Damage Prevention, Packing, and Paperwork are held year-round. Plus, some of the students had already graduated, in a sense. They were part of a special tier of movers called Elite, and they were distinguishable from the rest of the hundred or so workers by their black baseball caps and all-black (as opposed to black-and-red) uniforms. Katz said that these movers, like black belts in karate, had ascended the ranks from rookie to foreman, and were now qualified to handle luxury jobs. "We do everything," Eddie Sandler, one of the Elite movers, said. "We fold up the clothes and put them back in the drawers." Katz added, "The customers don't even know what hit them."

The lecture in Elite moving began at eleven, in a classroom that resembled the basement of a fancy house: a gilded Japanese chest, armoires full of china, sculptures, a TV. There were only three Elite movers in attendance. ("It's like a private school," Katz said.) The lecturer was Michael Gonzales, a foreman with silver braces, who specializes in long-distance moves. "I just got back from Canada," Gonzales said. He announced that he wanted to review luxury box-packing, and he grabbed a box and started lining it with bubble wrap. "Remember, guys, always use bubble wrap on the bottom of the actual box." He added foam. "Put a little bit of foam at the bottom, and put as much as you can on the sides." Then he placed plates, one by one, in foam slips and packed them in vertically, between strips of cardboard—"Never flat. When it's flat, it's easier to break." When Gonzales was done, he sealed the box with black tape that said "Elite" in curly letters.

"I love that tape," murmured Katz, from the back of the room.

Next door, a language class was in progress. A roomful of foreign-born movers were sitting around a Harkness table practicing English, to prepare them for customer interaction. The day's lesson was on formal versus informal sentence construction. The teacher, a young American woman, walked the class through a list of increasingly formal requests: "Can you sign here, please?" "Would you mind signing here, please?" "Can you lend me some money?" "Do you mind if I use your CD burner?" "I was wondering if you would mind lending me your car." It was fun, if somewhat disturbing, to imagine your moving guy saying this.

At noon, it was time for a rookie movers' class: Damage Prevention. The group was larger—ten or so students, including a lone female, Nailen Morin, who had been on the job for two weeks. The students seemed giddy but tense. Graduation is not guaranteed. (Katz: "We'll keep 'em here for a couple of weeks, until they're not nervous. When we decide they're ready, we'll send them out in the field.") The teacher was Mark Benn, a fifth-year mover with long dreadlocks. He showed the class how to wrap up a sofa by standing it on its side. "Anyone ever wrap a sofa like this?" The rookies shook their heads. Next came lessons in TV and picture packing, and a long Q. & A. session: "What do you do if you have a TV and you don't have a TV box?" (Make your own, using old boxes.) "What if you have a mirror?" (Do not set it down on pavement, because the frame could chip.) "One time, I had a sculpture made of wax," Benn recalled. "It was going to Hawaii. I didn't know what to do. If I packed it too tight, it would get hot and melt."

"What did you do?" a first-year mover asked.

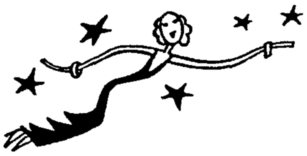
"We talked to the customer, and he told us, 'Just bubble-wrap it and send it like that.' I said, 'O.K.,' but first I called the office." He added, sternly, "If you're not sure, call the office. No one will think less of you." Then, in the tradition of commencement speakers, Benn offered some rules to live by: "Kitchen stuff and toiletries? Don't mix it. Food stuff and breakable stuff? No! Stuff from the desk and paperweights? Not in a china box!"

"How about cribs?" someone asked.

Benn said to disassemble them and give the screws to the customer. "You know our policy: we don't put cribs back together again."

—Lizzie Widdicombe

THE PICTURES
GREATEST OF EASE



Evan Rachel Wood is one of those actresses whose appearance and manner change so much from role to role that she can be hard to recognize. This may be another way of saying that she's good. She is twenty-one and has been working since she was five—her parents, back in North Carolina, were theatre people. Her first real whiff of stardom was the 2003 movie "Thirteen"; her second was the news, a few years later, that she was dating Marilyn Manson. Last year, she had a brief but fierce turn as Mickey Rourke's daughter in "The Wrestler." Next year, she'll play Mary Jane in Julie Taymor's version of "Spider-Man," on Broadway. This month, she fills the gamine slot in the new Woody Allen comedy, "Whatever Works." She does perky, blond, and dumb as a naïve foundling who marries a curmudgeonly physicist played by Larry David, whose part Allen wrote thirty years ago for Zero Mostel. A euphemist might observe that the role is timeless.

Wood seems to enjoy teaching her body to do unusual things; she has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do and takes belly-dancing lessons. Late one afternoon during a recent visit to New York, she escaped a "Whatever Works" press marathon to take a class in the flying trapeze. She appeared in the doorway of the Trapeze School New York's permanent rig, in a tent on West Thirtieth Street. She was red-carpet-ready, heavily made up, and dressed in a black-and-white dress and high heels. She disappeared to change into a sheer orange tank top and flared black tights. An instructor named Jeff cinched a safety harness around her waist. Between her shoulder blades, she had a tattoo that read, "All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream" (Poe). She had the number 15 tattooed behind her left ear (lucky number).

"Have you done this before?" Jeff asked.

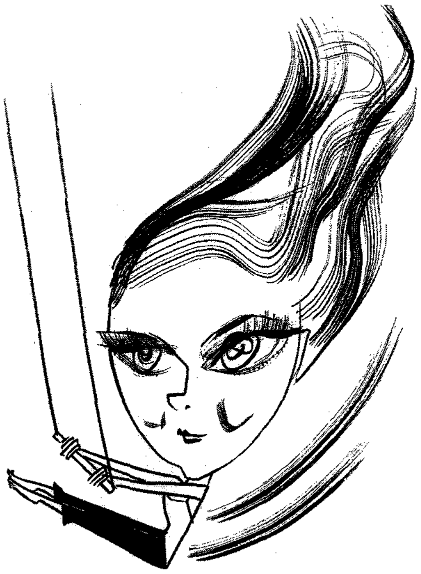
"Once," she said. "Three years ago."

After absorbing a few refreshers and chalking her hands, Wood mounted a ladder onto a platform about twenty-five feet off the ground. Another aspirant, who had changed into sweats and was looking forward to maybe performing some hocks-saltos and penny rolls with her, was advised that his surgically reconstructed shoulders rendered him unfit for the trapeze. An instructor demonstrated a position called "skin the cat," often attained by beginners making mistakes; it was suggestive of glenohumeral dislocation. Grounded, the aspirant watched plaintively as another instructor, a muscular woman named Zane, helped Wood prepare to get hold of the fly bar. Wood leaned out over the netting. Arms up, shoulders back, hips thrust forward. ("Don't take this the wrong way," an instructor named Matt had told her. "But think of showing off your chest.")

Off she went. She kept her toes pointed. Jeff shouted instructions: "Knees up. . . . Hands off. . . . Arch your back. . . . Reach up. . . . Legs down. . . . Legs forward, backward, forward, and . . . hep!"

"Hep" is trapeze-ese for "Go"—a signal that it's time, for example, to release the trapeze. A fundamental tenet of trapezing is "Wait for the hep." Failing to wait, when one trapezist is to be caught by another, fouls up the timing and can result in an inadvertent punch in the face.

Wood landed in the net and crawled to the edge and then did a little flip onto the ground. She had a husky laugh. She and Jeff gathered around a video monitor to watch a replay of her flight. Nearby, another instructor casually executed a one-armed handstand on a plastic chair.



Evan Rachel Wood

A woman named Danielle arrived, a friend since fifth grade (they met in a Tae Kwon Do class in Calabasas, California), whom Wood had recently hired as a personal assistant. ("Danielle, when did we team up?" "February 20th." "Are you serious? That long ago? Oh. My. God.") Wood climbed up again and tried a more difficult move, a split, and as she—Hep!—drifted down into the net Danielle exclaimed, "You look like a falling angel!" ("Who you are in the rig is who you are in life," Jeff had said earlier.)

It was time to try catches. Matt set himself up on a second trapeze, and began swinging to and fro, hanging by his knees, as Wood climbed the ladder. "This is like doing a scene," she said. "You have to trust that someone is going to catch you."

"Wait for the hep, wait for the hep," Jeff admonished. He barked a series of commands and—Hep!—she briefly went airborne, and then Matt had her by the wrists. After a moment, she dropped to the net, crawled over to Jeff, and said, "You are so right about waiting for the hep, man! It felt like forever."

—Nick Paumgarten

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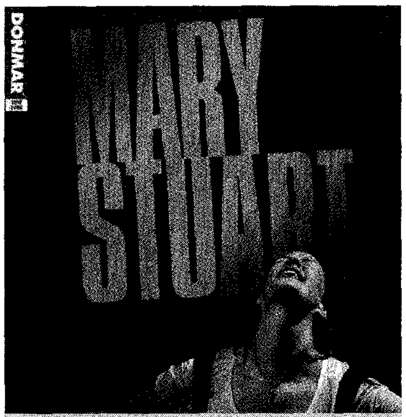

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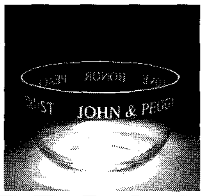

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LETTER FROM TEHRAN

WITH THE MARCHERS

A resident reports from the streets and the rooftops.

On the afternoon of June 15th, I bumped into my old friend Reza at the huge demonstration on Azadi Street—the march that nobody will ever forget. He was with his wife, Hengameh, his arm raised, giving the "V" sign for victory and shouting, "Death to the dictator!" Then he saw me. His eyes widened and we kissed on both cheeks. "How many?" he asked breathlessly, before answering himself. "A million, I'd say." I had last seen Reza a few months before, in the small office where he runs a modest trading business. He had looked pale and tired, and was complaining about money problems. But now was different. He shone. "Come to dinner tomorrow night," he called, and then we were separated.

According to a police official who was quoted in the Western press, a million or more people took part in the Azadi Street march. Later, I asked a person close to the rally organizers how many people there were, and he told me that he thought the figure was closer to two million. It was, he said, the biggest protest Iran had seen since the 1979 revolution, which overthrew the Shah. From where Reza and I stood, half a mile from the western end of Azadi Street, where it enters Azadi Square, a thick belt of humanity stretched eastward seemingly without end. Although the rally was illegal, there was no sign of riot police or Basij militiamen. In an Islamic republic that regards large, unsanctioned gatherings as a threat, the marchers were smiling with the joy of being in one happy, unhindered mass—a pleasurable feeling, utterly unfamiliar.

On June 14th, two days after the election that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is alleged to have stolen from his main challenger, the reformist Mir-Hossein Moussavi, I hurried back to Iran from a trip abroad. The next day, the day of the Azadi Street march, I had lunch with a journalist friend. In view of the election fiasco and the coverage that it had received abroad, my friend told me, the authorities were now trying to curtail the activities of the Western media. "If you want to write for a foreign magazine," he said, "do it without a byline." The authorities were refusing to extend the visas of most visiting foreign journalists; several Iranian journalists had been thrown in jail.

I had come to Azadi Street to lose myself in a crowd bedecked in green—Moussavi's color and, not coincidentally, Islam's. I had also come to try to work out what sort of Iranian had voted for Moussavi. According to the caricature sketched by his opponents during the campaign, Moussavi was backed by a coalition of radical counter-revolutionaries and their minions, who include some misguided students and pampered, Westernized hedonists from the well-heeled neighborhoods of north Tehran. The supporters of Ahmadinejad, by contrast, were said to be poor and virtuous, and to hold a monopoly on patriotism. The President has referred to Moussavi supporters as "chaff."

And yet, contrary to the caricature, the demonstrators around me represented an impressive cross-section of Iranian society. The crowd in Azadi Street was dominated by young people, and many of the girls wore the regulation black *maghna'eh*, or hooded cloak, that they wear in class. There were also elderly men and women, and families whose dress and appearance suggested that they had come from modest precincts of Tehran or the provinces. I saw a friend who has a government job. She had left work early, along with ten of her colleagues, and with the permission of her supervisor. We passed a government office building where employees were leaning out the windows, waving. I don't think much work got done in Tehran on June 15th.

A little farther on, I found myself once again near Reza and Hengameh. (I've changed their names.) Reza, who has a thick beard, and Hengameh, in a chador, have an old-fashioned "revolutionary" appearance. They do not look like the sort of people who would attend an unsanctioned rally against the regime. But there were plenty of marchers who looked like them—pious, middle-aged Iranians. This is the generation that took part in the 1979 revolution, and then, as in the case of Reza, fought in the long war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and, finally, grew tired of all the lies.

I have known Reza and Hengameh for a decade. I know that they are unfailingly loyal to the memory of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, but not to the current generation of leaders, who, with their love of power and their financial corruption, have, they believe, spoiled Iran. In addition, everything I have seen of Reza and Hengameh tells me that they are true democrats—for example, the relaxed way they have brought up their teen-age son, Mohsen. "We never obliged him to say his prayers or observe the Ramadan fast," Reza told me once, "and now he does both, of his own accord."

Iranians can draw on a rich culture of resistance to authority, going back to the country's first experiments with constitutional rule, a hundred years ago, and this, combined with their celebrated verbal dexterity, makes them naturals in the art of political verse. As we passed the Employment Ministry, the marchers improvised a chant: "Ministry of Employment, why so much unemployment?" We passed under a pedestrian bridge, from which dozens of people were watching the marchers. Then came another chant: "You won't win freedom of thought by standing on a bridge!" My favorite slogan was one that referred to Ahmadinejad's notorious claim, caught on film and subsequently made public, that he had been crowned by a "celestial halo" while addressing the United Nations General Assembly, in 2005: "He saw the celestial halo, but he didn't see our votes." Standing on a balcony overlooking Azadi Street, a man held a copy of the Koran above the heads of the marchers.

The march broke up peacefully, at around seven. Reza was surprised; he had expected the street to be full of police. He wondered why the Basijis hadn't attacked the protesters. "Maybe they're laying the groundwork for a concession," Hengameh said hopefully, alluding to Moussavi's demand that the election results be annulled and a new vote held.

Ahmadinejad dismissed Moussavi's supporters as "chaff," but in fact they represented an impressive cross-section of the electorate.

GETTY IMAGES

If the afternoon of June 15th was hope, the evening was despair. Seven protesters were killed during a clash with Basijis who fired on them from their barracks north of Azadi Street. Around the city, there was fighting between Basijis and pro-Moussavi demonstrators who had set fire to trash carts and buses. Drivers sounding their horns in support of Moussavi were dragged out of their cars and beaten, and the Basijis damaged and looted houses where they suspected Moussavi supporters had taken sanctuary. My wife's parents' cook, I found out the following day, spent half the night searching the streets for her son; he had gone out to defy the Basijis and got home at five in the morning, having spent the previous three hours hiding in the house of a stranger. From my apartment window, in north Tehran, I watched two Basijis, unable to catch a group of fleeing Moussavi supporters, use their truncheons to smash the windshields of every car parked on our street.

We had been wrong to be optimistic. Did the authorities mean to keep the peace at the rallies that Moussavi's supporters had vowed to hold, every day, until the election results were annulled, and to attack people at night, after they had dispersed? In extraordinary times, one rapidly gets used to new arrangements. Since June 14th, the people of Tehran have grown accustomed to attending to their daily business in the mornings, when the traffic circulates normally and the Basijis are asleep or at prayer, and planning their afternoons around either joining or avoiding the scheduled protest. At lunchtime, worried parents begin calling their children, entreating them to come home or go to a friend's house before things get "busy." The children assure their mothers that this is exactly what they plan to do, and then they go and join the march.

In the course of the afternoon, contact gets harder. The cell-phone networks seize up and the Internet performs even more sluggishly than usual, while the government tries to jam all foreign TV stations—in particular, the BBC's Persian-language channel. This channel, beaming images and reports sent by normal Iranian citizens back into the country, has been hugely influential in spreading news of the protests to Iranians who would otherwise have relied on state television or the inferior American-based Persian-language channels.

On the afternoon of June 16th, I rented a motorbike with a driver and went to the second pro-Moussavi march, on Tehran's main north-south artery. Again, the crowd was huge, if less easily quantifiable than it had been the previous day. Many people wore black, and the march was conducted largely in silence, out of respect for the people who had been killed the night before. I saw a marcher holding up a large photograph of one of the dead men. The dead man had a bloodied chest and lay cradled in another man's arms. Many of the marchers had gathered around and were taking snapshots of the photograph with their cell phones; those cell-phone images soon circulated around the world.

At seven, the streets were still calm. I left to go to Reza and Hengameh's house, in Yussefabad.

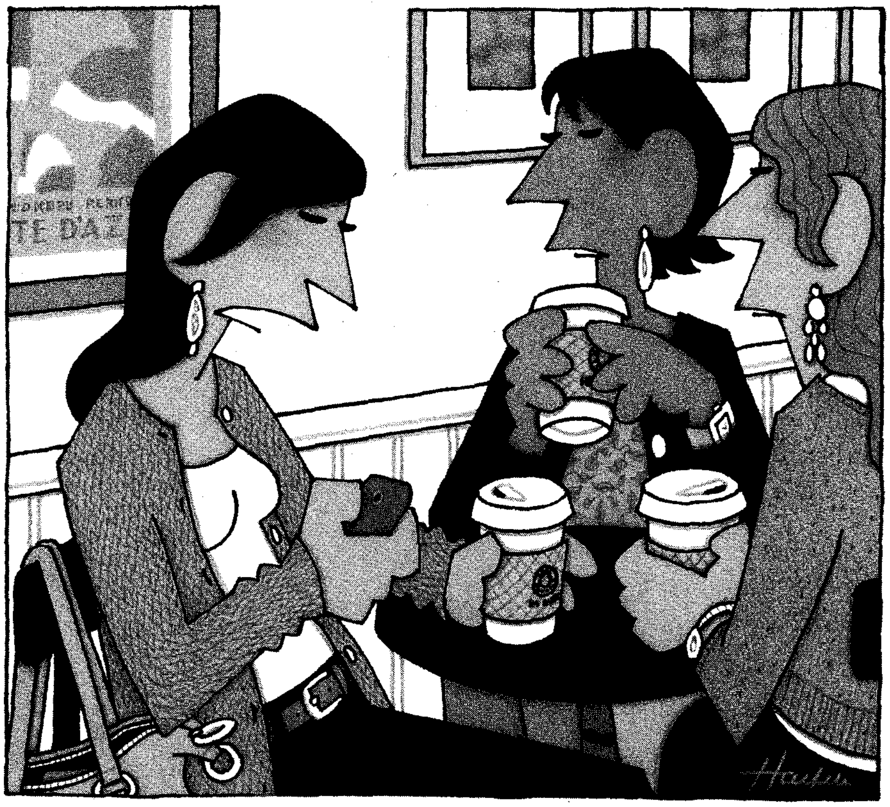
Yussefabad is a traditional middle-class neighborhood in the center of Tehran. Reza's apartment block, he told me as we went up in the elevator, is occupied mostly by native Tehranis, not migrants from the provinces. Reza used to live in eastern Tehran, but he likes Yussefabad better. "It's a proper neighborhood," he said. By that, he meant that it is clean and friendly, with all the shops you need, and a strong family ethos.

We sat on the small balcony of Reza and Hengameh's flat, and ate peaches and plums. Our friendship began when Reza and I met and discovered that we shared an interest in Persian literature; the relationship soon came to include our families. Hengameh is a superb cook and tolerant of her husband's indifferent entrepreneurial record. I had always found her a reserved person, but tonight she seemed markedly less demure. The unrest was agitating people, causing them to lower their guard. She called Ahmadinejad "Ahmadi *geda*," which means "beggar Ahmadi," and laughed wickedly.

A change had also come over Mohsen, their son. The last time we met, he had been a typical teen-ager, sulky and monosyllabic. Now Mohsen seemed fully grown, an adult, and he participated enthusiastically in our conversation, which inevitably revolved around politics and the marches. Mohsen had been active in Yussefabad on behalf of the local Moussavi campaign, standing on street corners and handing out leaflets. He had also run the Basiji gantlet, and had the bruises on his knees to prove it.

"Are you sure the election was a fraud?" I asked him.

Mohsen smiled ruefully. "Some of the boys from the campaign headquarters were at the local count, and when they came back that evening they were laughing and saying it was all over—Ahmadinejad had no chance. Then . . ." Mohsen shrugged, and his father said, "You should have seen this neighborhood. There was hardly a single Ahmadinejad poster. Only green. Only green! Of course it was a fraud. They stole the vote."



"Let me see what my mother wants—aside from attention."

Mohsen brought out glasses of tea on a tray. As we drank the tea, we discussed the deaths of the previous night, and Reza shook his head sadly. "The idea of a Basiji shooting a fellow-Iranian!" he said. "When I was a Basiji, all we wanted to do was kill Iraqis. The idea of killing an Iranian wouldn't have entered my head!"

Ever since I'd known Reza, he'd made a point of not having a satellite dish on his roof. He distrusted the foreign television channels, and was content to watch Iranian state TV. During the recent election campaign, however, as state television praised Ahmadinejad endlessly, he had found it difficult to watch; it made him feel physically sick. He bought a satellite dish, so that the family can now watch the BBC's Persian channel—or, at least, when it isn't jammed. "It has shown us that everything we have been watching here, most of our lives, is full of lies," he said.

"Give me an example," I said, and he replied, "You know what they said on TV about yesterday's march? They could hardly pretend it never happened, because it was all over the foreign channels and the Internet. So they announced that the rally had been organized by all four Presidential candidates, including Ahmadinejad, in the name of national unity!"

He said, "You can imagine what all this is doing to my father." Reza's father was a mid-level bureaucrat before his retirement, a few years ago. He adored Khomeini. He would have given his life for the Iranian Revolution. "You know what he said to me after he heard about the seven people who were shot last night? He said, 'I regret everything I've done in my life.' "

There was a sombre pause, and we listened to the sound of a car driving along the street below. We told some Ahmadinejad jokes to cheer ourselves up. Hengameh summoned us from the balcony to eat dinner, a stew of lamb and chickpeas in a brown sauce made tart by lemon juice, and the conversation turned to more pleasant subjects. Then it was almost nine-thirty: time to go up to the roof.

For any Iranian who remembers 1979, today's unrest is full of echoes. The slogans we were hearing, such as "Death to the dictator!" and "Freedom or death!," evoke the revolution, as does the victory sign. And now, joining other people from the building on the roof—and the inhabitants of thousands of other apartment blocks—we sensed something else: that, after thirty years, the revolution seemed to be destroying itself.

On the roof, Reza introduced me to a man who said that he had been at university with Ahmadinejad. "He used to kiss us on the cheeks when he saw us, and we would go and wash our faces," Reza's neighbor said. Everyone laughed. Reza went to the edge of the roof, cupped his hands around his mouth, and bellowed, "*Allahu Akbar!*" God is great!

From the apartment block across the street came the response: "*Allahu Akbar!*"

Suddenly, the night sky was filled with this powerful affirmation. As my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, I saw that on all the roofs around us were men, women, and children. The chanting lasted for half an hour, with pauses to chat and joke. During one such pause, Reza murmured to me, "These may be only words, but I can assure you it was '*Allahu Akbar*' as much as the strikes and the demonstrations that did in the Shah in '79."

A few minutes later, I told Reza that I'd better go and asked if he would call me a cab. He went downstairs, but returned shaking his head. "The drivers refuse to go north," he said. "The Basijis are smashing cars around Parkway and Vali Asr Street. You'll have to stay the night here."

On June 19th, after a week of steady—and peaceful—protests, and clashes after nightfall, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader—the man who has the last word on all matters of state, and who is an unabashed supporter of Ahmadinejad—made it clear while addressing a large congregation at Friday prayers that the demands of Moussavi and his supporters would not be met. "The Islamic Republic state would not cheat and would not betray the vote of the people," he said, effectively ruling out annulment of the vote. If the street protests, which he described as "not acceptable," did not end, there was the possibility of "bloodshed and chaos." ♦

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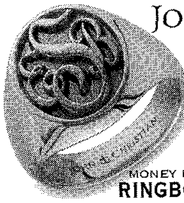

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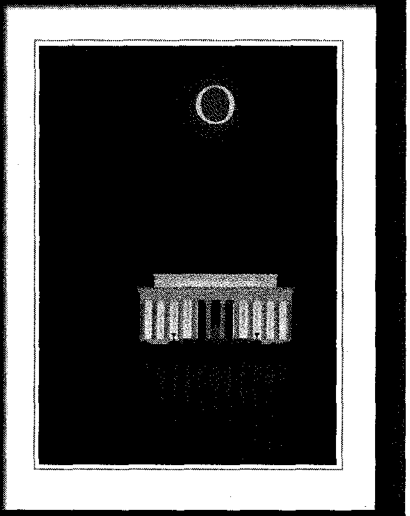

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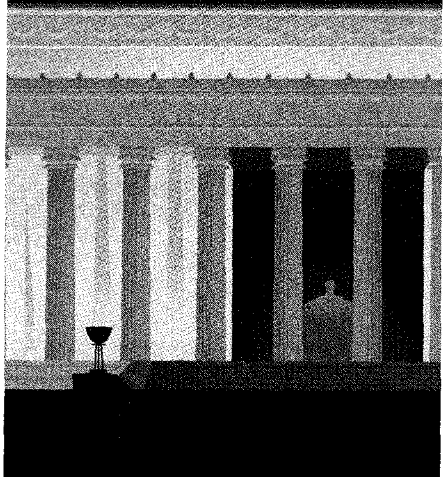

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LITERARY LIVES

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

Early letters from Edith Wharton.

BY REBECCA MEAD

Edith Wharton, in her 1934 autobiography, “A Backward Glance,” made ironical sport of the fact that, as a child, she was forbidden to read novels. By then in her seventies and the author of twenty-five works of fiction, she wrote that her mother, Lucretia Jones—a society hostess who, in Wharton's telling, was indifferent to the life of the mind—decreed “that I should never read a novel without asking her permission. . . . In order to save further trouble she almost always refused to let me read it.”

One novel that Wharton did read, however, was “Daniel Deronda,” by George Eliot. It is not recorded whether Lucretia sanctioned this tale, which centers on the ill-advised marriage between the sadistic Henleigh Grandcourt and the impoverished Gwendolen Harleth, and the unrequited love of Gwendolen for the intellectual, questing Daniel Deronda; but, one way or another, Wharton obtained a copy in September, 1876, the year of its publication, and delivered a witty critique of Eliot's work. “The story is nothing, & I do not care for the style,” Wharton wrote, after almost completing the first volume. “But the thoughts with which it overflows are wonderfully clever—& I don't think as ill of the hero as most people do. To be sure, he is a parcel of theories, loosely tied up, a puppet so badly stuffed that the sawdust shows—but the contents of the parcel & the doll—the theories, or sawdust—are good.” She declared Gwendolen “interesting,” but dismissed Mirah Lapidoth, the young Jewish woman whom Daniel Deronda ultimately marries. “I don't care for your pieces of faultlessness, like the good girls of such extravagant saintliness in Sunday school books,” she wrote. “Mirah is of that type—like diluted rose-water.”

Wharton—or Edith Newbold Jones, as she was then known—was fourteen when she wrote these words; her correspondent was Anna Bahlmann, a governess who was hired in 1874, when Edith was twelve, to teach her German, and who remained in her family's service for much of the next forty years. Between 1874 and 1915, the year before Bahlmann's death, Wharton wrote her more than a hundred and thirty letters; after Bahlmann died, most likely of cancer, the letters came into the possession of Bahlmann's closest relative, a niece who lived in Kansas City. Wharton, who was vigilant about her legacy, requested that the letters be destroyed; but Bahlmann's niece kept them. For more than fifty years, they languished in an attic; for the past four decades, they have been stored in a safe-deposit box, unseen by scholars. (Their owner, Bahlmann's great-grandniece, who is now in her seventies, had once thought of writing a book about her ancestor and Wharton, but never did.) On June 24th, the letters come up for auction, at Christie's.

Wharton was a tireless correspondent—her archive at the Beinecke Library, at Yale, consists of twenty boxes of correspondence. But, of all these letters, only one has been discovered that was written before she married, in 1885. By contrast, about twenty of the letters written to Anna Bahlmann date from the coming-of-age of “the naughty girl, Miss Pussy,” as Wharton calls herself in one of them.

To Bahlmann, who was thirteen years her senior, Wharton writes of books she is reading, and poems and stories she is writing and translating. She mentions suitors she is entertaining, and talks about the diversions of Newport, Rhode Island, and New York City, where the Jones family had residences. Her voice is by turns playful, sardonic, ardent, and self-deprecating; the narrative self-assurance and linguistic deftness of the novelist she became is already palpable. At fourteen, she writes, “I feel really beatific tonight, having received a letter from Brooklyn, practised violently one of Beethoven's waltzes (a species of funereal hymn), made two rosettes for a

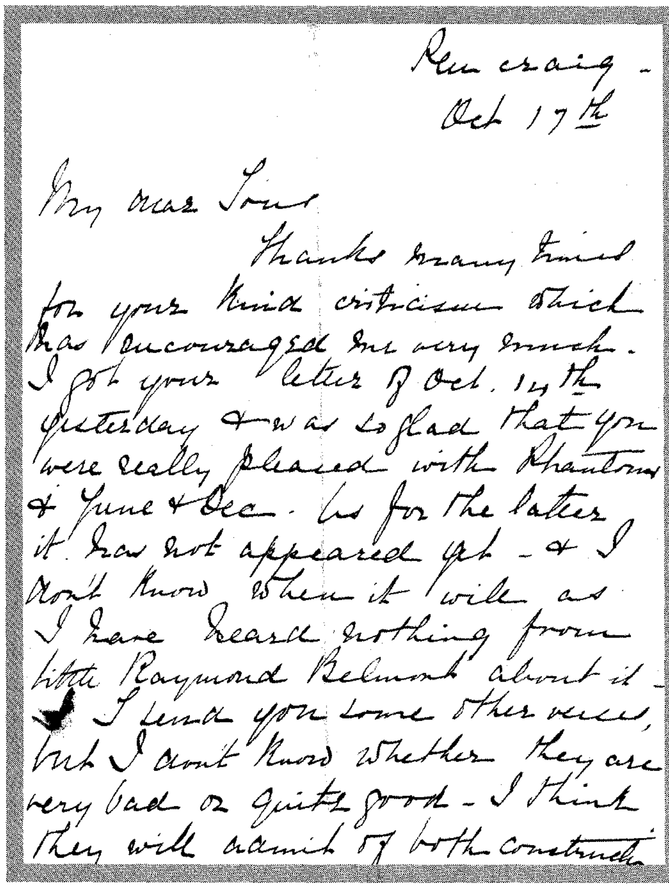
LEFT: COURTESY CHRISTIE'S IMAGES; RIGHT: ESTATE OF EDITH WHARTON/BEINECKE LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY

new pair of slippers and generally behaved myself—a sensation having still the charm of novelty."

Edith Wharton, who was born in 1862, is said to have been delighted in her maturity by a friend's observation that she, like her contemporary Theodore Roosevelt, was a "self-made man"; but the deprivations of Pussy Jones were cultural rather than economic. "My childhood & youth were an intellectual desert," she wrote when she was in her sixties. She was born at the family home, 14 West Twenty-third Street, just off Madison Square Park. In "A Little Girl's New York," an addendum to "A Backward Glance," Wharton wrote, "I have often sighed, in looking back at my childhood, to think how pitiful a provision was made for the life of the imagination behind those uniform brownstone façades." She loved Pencraig, the family's Newport estate, which had a veranda scented with honeysuckle and a private beach. But life there was hardly more stimulating, particularly since Wharton, who had almost died of typhoid at the age of nine and was weakened by the illness, was forbidden exposure to "anything that required a mental effort."

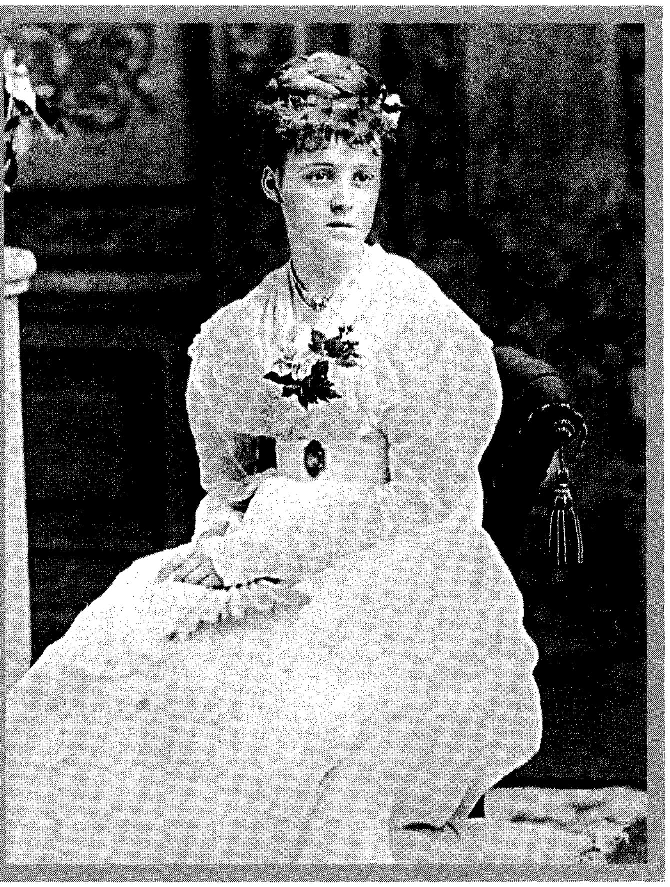
The Joneses were of irreproachable pedigree. Wharton's father, George Frederic Jones, was not among the spectacularly wealthy of the era—the family lived in Europe for six years when Wharton was a small girl, Italy and France being more affordable than New York and Newport—but he was sufficiently provided for by inherited real estate that he did not need to work. Her mother was descended from a good old New York family. In her maturity, Wharton cursed the comfortable blandness of her childhood—"stodging in New York" is how she once described her adolescence—and cast her youthful self as a misfit with an overactive imagination: "like some pale predestined child who disappears at night to dance with 'the little people.' " Her father had forsaken a youthful fondness for poetry for books of facts ("Arctic explorations especially absorbed him," Wharton wrote in her autobiography, with damning brevity), while her mother—whose main diversion was apparently the acquisition of fine clothing—was even less sympathetic to literature. At the age of eleven, Wharton reports, she made her maiden attempt at a novel of manners, which began with one character saying to another, "Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Brown? . . . If only I had known you were going to call I should have tidied up the drawing-room." Lucretia's devastating critique: "Drawing-rooms are always tidy."

The adult Wharton depicted herself as having been alone in her youthful literary preoccupations. "I never exchanged a word with a really intelligent human being until I was over twenty," she once wrote. In "A Backward Glance," Anna Bahlmann is given a sideways glance, described in passing as "my beloved German teacher, who saw which way my fancy turned, and fed it with all the wealth of German literature, from the Minnesingers to Heine." Wharton was even more grudging in "Life and I," an autobiographical fragment written in the nineteen-twenties, saying of Bahlmann that "my good little governess was cultivated & consci-



Pencraig -
Oct 17th

My dear Tonni
Thanks many times
for your kind criticism which
has encouraged me very much.
I got your letter of Oct. 14th
yesterday & was so glad that you
were really pleased with Phantoms
& June & Dec. As for the latter
it has not appeared yet - & I
don't know when it will as
I have heard nothing from
little Raymond Belmont about it -
I send you some other verses,
but I don't know whether they are
very bad or quite good - I think
they will admit of both construct-



In the letters, the narrative self-assurance and linguistic deftness of the novelist Wharton became is already palpable.

entious, but she never struck a spark from me, she never threw a new light on any subject."

But the letters to Bahlmann reveal that the good little governess was a significant mentor, and a greater intellectual companion than Wharton, in her retrospective self-fashioning, cared to remember. (The letters were written when Bahlmann—who also worked for the Joneses' Newport neighbors and other well-born families—was obliged to travel for work, or when she and Wharton were otherwise separated.) The letters show that Edith seized upon Bahlmann as firmly as the captain of a sailboat in Newport Bay grasps the tiller on a windy day. "You are my Supreme critic . . . & I look upon your verdict with infinite faith & respect," she wrote in a letter of 1878. The strength of this attachment may speak as much to her hunger for an intellectual companion as it does to Bahlmann's own cleverness; unfortunately, the governess's letters, from which her measure might be taken, do not survive. But a letter from 1880 indicates that Edith believed herself to have found with Bahlmann the kind of friendship "which makes itself felt less by personal intercourse, than by those shocks of intellectual sympathy which seem to bridge over silence and space and make two minds as one."

To Bahlmann Edith conveyed her opinions of the poems she was reading, such as Longfellow's "The Mask of Pandora," which she admired, but with reservations. "His poetry always reminds me of a chilly sculpture, it is so lifeless," she wrote. "His characters want vigour. They are passionless & collected as if they were walking in a trance." Under Bahlmann's tutelage, Edith translated Goethe's poetry, working on a version of "Mignon." (She continued to quote the work into her old age.) In 1876, she wrote to Bahlmann, "I have been more than rewarded by your frank criticism, which is so much more of compliment to me than the polite, unmeaning, 'Oh it's lovely,' which I so often get when I beg for an honest opinion."

She sent Bahlmann her own poems, too. "I don't know whether they are very bad or quite good," she wrote, after sending her a package of verses. "I think they will admit of both constructions, so you may choose." In her autobiography, Wharton said that her poems—"which I poured out with a lamentable facility"—were often written on sheets of brown paper that previously had been wrapped around deliveries to the Joneses' household, the provision of foolscap being inadequate to her demands. But her poetic efforts were not, she acknowledged, entirely ignored by her parents: her mother had a selection of her compositions privately published, under the title "Verses," when she was sixteen.

Although as a grown woman Wharton emphasized the effect of her parents' selective neglect upon her literary development, in the Bahlmann letters she seems, in the manner of adolescents everywhere, oblivious of George and Lucretia Jones except as occasionally useful facilitators. Her father performs the drudgery of copying out her translations ("Rewriting my eloquent effusions is horrible to me"), and her mother performs necessary managerial functions. "About such prosaic things as business matters"—presumably, the latest terms of Bahlmann's employment—"what can the immortal translator of Goethe have to say?" the fourteen-year-old Edith declares, with a grandeur that seems only in part self-mocking. "I leave that to Mama, who is going to write you on rational subjects."

When Wharton, in her autobiography, tells the story of her first, abortive attempt to write a novel, she suggests that her mother's dismissive remarks sent her storytelling self scurrying into a hole for almost thirty years. In fact, at the age of fourteen she did complete a novel of manners, entitled "Fast and Loose." (It went unpublished until 1977.) Concerning the exploits of the enticing Georgie Rivers, who spurns her devoted but penniless lover for marriage with a rich, elderly lord, "Fast and Loose," which she wrote under the pen name David Olivieri, is surprisingly funny. (After dispatching a three-line note accepting the lord's marriage proposal, Georgie reflects that it is "like answering a dinner-invitation . . . but I can't make it longer. I don't know what to say!") In a particularly sophisticated turn, Edith wrote several

"Forgive the informality—my secretary is on vacation."

deflationary "reviews" of the work. One, supposedly from *The Nation*, declares that Olivieri is "very like a sick-sentimental school-girl."

Having tried to figure out for herself how fiction works—and having understood her own failures—Edith was able to dissect the novels she read with remarkable insight. Of "Consuelo," by George Sand, she wrote to Bahlmann, "I have given up in despair. All the claptrap and fol-de-rol and mysticism were too much for me. . . . As if there wasn't beauty and mystery and charm enough in real life without going over to the supernatural for your great effects. It must be the vulgarest kind of mind which has to resort to blue lights and tinsel and pantomime to produce any impression." At sixteen, discussing George Eliot's "Middlemarch," she wrote, "I always have a secret *faiblesse* for Rosamond which I suppose denotes a sympathetic flaw in my own moral structure." She went on:

> As for Dorothea, what most jars upon me is her want of artistic feeling,—a wonderful touch of character drawing, but so well drawn, that it continually provokes me. . . . Will Ladislaw is charming, but somehow although a great deal is *said* of the passion between him & Dorothea one fails all through to feel its power. When it was so dangerous to love at all, they might have loved a little more! A continual desire on my part to throttle Mr. Brooke, Mrs. Cadwallader & Cecilia & Sir James only shows how wonderfully life-like they all are.

The critique is as smart, and considerably fairer, than the one she gave in a 1902 review of an Eliot biography: "Her plots are as easily detachable from her books as dead branches from a living tree."

Wharton received no formal schooling, and always said that she owed what education she had to her father's library, which ranged from Ruskin's "Modern Painters" to the German myths of Das Nibelungenlied. In "A Backward Glance," she portrayed herself as a highbrow naïf: "A little girl . . . to whom the Old Testament, the Apocalypse and the Elizabethan dramatists were open, could not long pine for Whyte Melville or even Rhoda Broughton." But her letters to Bahlmann reveal that she did not spend all her time devouring Middle High German. In 1878, she was enjoying "the most bewitching book": "Around the World in the Yacht 'Sunbeam,' " a best-selling travelogue, by Anna Brassey. And in 1878 she read the correspondence not just of Goethe and Schiller—a treasured gift from Bahlmann—but also of Mary Russell Mitford, a popular writer. "Literary merit there is none in her letters, beyond a good plain style, & social & historical interest is lacking as well, for she 'twaddles,' as you call it, of mere nobodies," Pussy Jones wrote to her governess, in a tone that is familiar to readers of Wharton's novels. "One only wishes that she & her correspondence had remained as obscure as her friends!"

The Joneses hired Bahlmann, who was the American-born child of German immigrants, after returning from their European sojourn. (An undated photograph of Bahlmann that is included in the Christie's archive reveals her to be a severe-looking woman, with a gaunt face and unadorned hair.) Those years abroad left the young Edith with vivid memories of Italy, France, and Spain, and an enduring dissatisfaction with life on this side of the Atlantic. The pursuits of her class of Americans, which served as the material for her novels, are glimpsed in her letters. In August, 1876, writing from Pencraig, she reported that she had been invited to join an archery club, and told Bahlmann of the latest craze, lawn tennis, which she called "difficult, tiresome, & destructive to pretty dresses & to the complexion, but nevertheless delightful." "The Age of Innocence," published forty-five years later, is set in the eighteen-seventies; the narrator notes that lawn tennis is "still considered too rough and inelegant for social occasions, and as an opportunity to show off pretty dresses and graceful attitudes the bow and arrow held their own."

The letters also mention urban diversions. In 1880, Edith gives Bahlmann an account of attending the opera at the Academy of Music, in Manhattan. "I heard Faust sung on Friday night—at the Academy, and somehow you got mixed with the lyric rapture, and you were with me hearing it, and drinking your fill of those 'Divine Ideas below / That always find us young / And always keep us so,' " she writes, quoting Emerson. By the time Wharton describes Newland Archer

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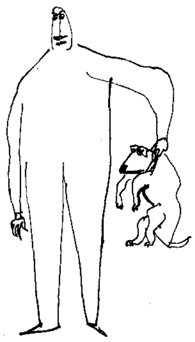
attending a production of "Faust" at the Academy, in "The Age of Innocence," her perspective is considerably more ironic: "It was one of the great livery-stableman's most masterly intuitions to have discovered that Americans want to get away from amusement even more quickly than they want to get to it." (In 1883, while staying for a time in Cannes, Wharton met Gounod, the composer of "Faust," who performed a musicale at the home of the Duchesse de Luynes, a well-known *salonnière*. "What a treat!" she wrote to Bahlmann. "Such a handsome old man with a white beard & excited gestures & wild eyes. He is just out of an Insane Asylum & looks as if he might go back any day.")

In 1880, the Jones family once again repaired to Europe, on the recommendation of the doctors of George Frederic Jones, who was suffering from nervous exhaustion. Her father's ill health seems barely to have registered with Edith, who was eager to return to the Continent, and urged Bahlmann to accompany them: "How I am waiting for your letter to come saying, yes I will go with you, Herz—Remember, dear Tonni, your promise to come whenever we called you." (She often addressed Bahlmann with this nickname, and signed herself Herz—German for "heart.") When Bahlmann agreed to go, Wharton giddily quoted from "Mignon": "We shall be standing together on the deck of the Britannic a month from to-day—Doesn't it seem strange? *Dahin! Dahin!*"



Among her preoccupations for the trip was choosing books to take: "Milton, Shelley and Browning must certainly go—and Wordsworth of course. I think of reading Shelley's 'Evening' at Pisa where it was written." She felt ready to "explode" with excitement at the prospect of the trip. "The first place which I shall go in Florence will be the church of Santa Maria Novella, for I shall never forget the impression made upon me years ago by its black and white façade and the silver lamps hanging in all its side chapels," Edith wrote of a city she had last seen at the age of ten. "The prospect of seeing it all again has revived my faded recollections—I am sure I could show you about Florence like a guide-book."

Edith Newbold Jones's formal début as an author took place in 1880, when a handful of poems—gloomy lyrics about lost love and lost chances—appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, then edited by William Dean Howells. She wrote to Bahlmann, "Here is what Howells . . . says about them: 'If I can think of any good name I will print them in a little group. They strike me as having a fresh, delicate and authentic quality. It is something very uncommon to find so young a writer reminding you so very little of other writers.' So much for Mr. Howells." (Several months later, Edith told Bahlmann, "Scribner has accepted my sonnet 'St Martin's Summer' & sent me a check for $7. Which is doing very well for 14 lines.")

When Edith received her advance copy of *The Atlantic*, she shrugged it off with a joke: "Better news is that I have had a charming photograph done at Mora's." She was referring to José Maria Mora, a photographer whose studio, near Washington Square, was known for having more than a hundred and fifty painted backdrops. "I hope you will find me *grandement en beauté* when you see my picture—I should never recognize it, it is so pretty, but they tell me it is very like," she wrote.

In her autobiography, Wharton reported that she was a self-conscious adolescent: "Much less pretty than many of the girls, and less quick at the up-take than the young men, I might have suffered from an inferiority complex had such ailments been known." Still, the Bahlmann letters show Edith to be more than capable of flirtation with affable young men. In an 1879 letter, she mentions a fellow she refers to as "the Doppeladler," a "double eagle." "He made himself very agreeable, and I have three compliments, which I look upon as for *you*, not for *me*, and have saved up accordingly for exportation to Cuba," she writes to Bahlmann, who was evidently travelling in another family's service. She goes on:

> He said that I knew more of German literature than he does (and he sets up to be rather well-read) that "my knowledge of the language was wonderful" and that he had never quoted anything (and he is very quote-y) which I had not recognized—there! "Lay that flattering unction to your soul, good Tonni." Think of my turning out to be a credit to you after all! Well, you taught me German to such good purpose that the Sécrètaire de la Majesté Imp. & Royale etc sent me two splendid bouquets within a week before he left, and I am engaged to dance the Cotillion with him at the "Patriarch" ball.

The letters do not reveal what became of the "Doppeladler," though they do complicate the story of Wharton's first engagement, as it has been understood by her biographers. In the summer of 1880, Edith Jones, then eighteen, was courted by Henry Leyden Stevens, three years her senior, and a sporty member of the Newport circle. (He had spent some time at Oxford University and elsewhere in England, returning without a degree but with the equipment to lay out Newport's first lawn-tennis court.) His late father, Paran Stevens, had been a co-owner of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, opposite the Joneses' New York home; his mother, the daughter of a grocer from Lowell, Massachusetts, was a social climber. Stevens visited the Joneses on their European tour, and he was with them in Cannes when Edith's father died, in March, 1882. In August, the couple became engaged.

But that fall the betrothal was broken off. Wharton's biographers have speculated that Mrs. Stevens—who had engineered the marriage of her daughter to the second son of a British lord—considered Edith Jones an insufficient catch, or that she felt snubbed by the Joneses and their friends. She may also have wished to maintain a few more years of control over the fortune her son would inherit upon marriage (or at twenty-five, whichever came sooner). It was officially given out that the demurring party in the match was Edith, but the gossip sheet *Town Topics* noted that "the only reason for the breaking of the engagement . . . is an alleged preponderance of intellectuality on the part of the intended bride." Curiously, in a letter to Bahlmann from the spring of 1883, Edith says that Stevens has once again visited the Joneses in Cannes. "Mr. Stevens gave me such a pretty ring for Easter—a black & a white pearl," she wrote, five months after it was reported that she was too clever to be his bride; she also referred to the expectation that she was supposed to be "spliced" the next summer.

In her autobiographical writings,

THE "WORLD-FAMOUS" LIPIZZANERS

They trail the trademark Royal Lipizzans,
a day or three later, eschewing big arenas
named after software for more questionable,
outdoor venues, county fairs like this,
where you wander among pygmy goats at dusk
to locate the gate, always pay cash.
There are fewer white stallions here,
and they don't jump as high, but the crowd
of fat men, angular women, and their sleepy,
sun-kissed kids cheers wildly and stomps
its boots in time to brave Beethoven squeezed
from two tiny speakers. *That's the way,*
Santa Rosa, barks the commentator
in his iridescent blue suit, a decade
or two past Vegas. *These horses*
love it when you make a lot of noise!
So do the red-uniformed women riders,
who grin resolutely through *quadrilles,*
caprioles, and *airs above the ground,*
broadcasting their teeth. Best of all,
these horses like to jiggle from the ring,
halt, then bolt breakneck for the barn—
whee! Hang the rules! A stud stampede
of Royal Riding School truants! Oh, less
than venerable Viennese, elbows pumping
their horny white stallions barnward
at suicidal speeds, driving Santa
Rosa mad with glee, as mushroom clouds
of dust ascend under the klieg lights,
coating our throats! Get a load of how
they do this in California, oh, Emperor
Franz Josef, oh, Elisabeth, mournful
Empress, oh, Troy Tinker of the blue neon
suit! We eat this dust, we yell for more.

—*Julie Bruck*

Wharton skirted her youthful romantic history, saying, in "Life and I," "I inspired no romantic passions! It may be added that I felt none, & that the two or three young men who—in the natural course of things—honoured me with their devotion, inspired me with no feelings but that of a friendly liking. I did not fall in love till I was twenty-one." Wharton was careful not to say with whom she fell in love at twenty-one: at that age, she met both Edward (Teddy) Wharton, her future husband, and Walter Van Rensselaer Berry, with whom she sustained a lifelong and intimate friendship. She never wrote directly about Stevens, but in an 1885 letter to Bahlmann, written after the announcement of her engagement to Teddy Wharton, she alluded to the painful episode, with intimations of humiliation. "If my present happiness had come to me at eighteen, I should probably have taken it as a matter of course," she wrote. "But coming to me after certain Experiences of which you know, it seems almost incredible that a man can be so devoted, so generous, so sweet-tempered & unselfish."

Anna Bahlmann remained part of Wharton's extended household for the rest of her life, eventually becoming her literary secretary. As a novelist, Wharton liked to write in bed in the mornings, letting completed pages fall to the floor; after they were gathered up, Bahlmann typed them. The relationship between Wharton and her former governess grew from one of youthful intimacy into something more functional. One of the later letters refers to Bahlmann's helpfulness in advising her about a suitable New York residence: "We hear that Park Avenue, in spite of the disadvantages you mention, is not absolutely uninhabitable."

Bahlmann was between an employee and a friend, and Wharton's sense of duty toward her is evident: she bought her clothes while on her trips to Europe ("I have got you a brown serge dress, & a dark blue cloth mantle. . . . Fortunately the capes that are worn this year will fit anyone, so even if the dresses don't fit you can retire under your blue cape & conceal the dreadful secret!") and found ways to provide her with extra money. "We have made $5000 'in sugar,' & as we have been successful I will confide in you that in going into the speculation we risked a tiny amount for you, & your winnings are $200 for which I will shortly send you a cheque," she wrote from Paris, in the mid-nineties. "Don't rebuke me for having gambled for you." She even negotiated additional employment for Bahlmann, including work as a tutor to the daughter of Colonel William Jay: "He deserves encouragement for wanting his daughter to be just like me, & I hope you will do your best to produce something approaching the intellectual *chef d'œuvre* now addressing you."

Bahlmann continued to serve as a confidante for Wharton. In 1896, the marriage of Wharton's older brother, Freddie, to her beloved sister-in-law, Minnie, fell apart; Wharton wrote to Bahlmann, "You have of course heard by this time of the wretched business of Minnie's having been obliged to divorce my brother, & of the deluded & perverted view of the situation which he has influenced my mother to take. For months past I have been doing my best to keep off this catastrophe, & to try to make my mother see what an unjust & mistaken attitude she was being led to take; but you know how completely she is controlled by the emotion of the moment, & how little capable she is . . . of forming an independent judgment."

Wharton's own marriage was, as it turned out, as unsatisfactory as that of Freddie and Minnie. Teddy Wharton was no more intellectually inclined than her parents, and he was far fonder than she was of the life offered by their narrow social circle. Without explicitly confessing the disappointments of her marriage to Bahlmann, Wharton hinted at the divergence of interests between herself and Teddy that contributed to her own scandalous divorce, which was finalized in 1913. "Teddy is bored with this life, as I knew he would be," she wrote from Europe, in 1894. "It is charming to drive from one place to another, but one can't do that forever, & when one settles down it seems rather purposeless." In 1896, she spoke with resignation of their planned return to the United States: "Time was, as you know, when I should have been glad to make my home in Europe, but it was made in America, & I have fitted myself into it *tant bien que mal*, & taken its creases more than I realized until I left it again."

If Wharton had to squeeze herself into the contours of her domestic identity, her burgeoning literary identity offered liberation, and in this pursuit she considered Bahlmann an indispensable ally. In 1893, after *Scribner's* bought her third short story, Wharton sent the proceeds on to Bahlmann as a Christmas present, saying, "The story is so associated in my mind with the hours that we spent in writing it out together . . . that I have a peculiar feeling about your having just this special cheque & no other as a souvenir of our work together."

In "The Age of Innocence," Newland Archer, imagining an alternative existence to the one that convention has pressed upon him, is described as having "built up within himself a kind of sanctuary" of "his secret thoughts and longings." Wharton goes on:

> Little by little it became the scene of his real life, and of his only rational activities; thither he brought the books he read, the ideas and feelings which nourished him, his judgments and visions. Outside it, in the scene of his actual life, he moved with a growing sense of unreality and insuffciency, blundering against familiar prejudices and traditional points of view as an absent-minded man goes on bumping into the furniture of his room.

The central figure in Archer's imagined reality is the Countess Olenska, with whom a future is impossible; but, as R. W. B. Lewis points out in an essay on the novel, Archer's predicament echoes passages in Wharton's autobiography, in which she notes the divergence between the social life she was obliged by her upbringing to conduct, and her secret, passionate creative life. "There was in me a secret retreat where I wished no one to intrude, or at least no one whom I had yet encountered," she wrote. "Words and cadences haunted it like song-birds in a magic wood, and I wanted to be able to steal away and listen when they called." Her letters to Anna Bahlmann show, with poignant clarity, that this sense of division—which so richly fed her novelistic imagination—was something that she felt from her earliest years; and if she later forgot the degree to which her governess had nurtured her incipient powers, that is perhaps because her powers were so much greater than could be contained within the stuffy rooms where her studies unfolded.

What the elderly Wharton remembered of those years instead was the thrilling discovery of what can be done with words—a discovery, as she wrote to Bahlmann upon reading Dante's Inferno in 1889, more significant to her than any other. "And then the piercing sweetness of such lines as '*Guardami ben, ben son, ben son, Beatrice*'—Well, I am almost afraid it is finer than Milton," she wrote. "I don't believe there is any greater blessing than that of being pierced through & through by the splendour or sweetness of words, & no one who is not transfixed by '*Die Sonne tönt nach alter Weise*,' or 'thick as Autumnal leaves that strew the brooks,' has known half the joy of living. Don't you agree with me?—I wouldn't take a kingdom for it." ♦

DEPARTMENT OF CLARIFICATION

From the Times Web site.

A spokeswoman for Pittsburgh Public Schools says a high school student swung around a snake from a biology class, but didn't use it as a jump rope as police had said. Schools spokeswoman Ebony Pugh said Wednesday, "It's not a big enough snake to jump rope with."

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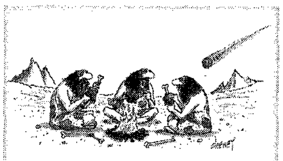
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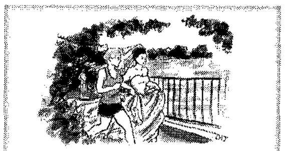
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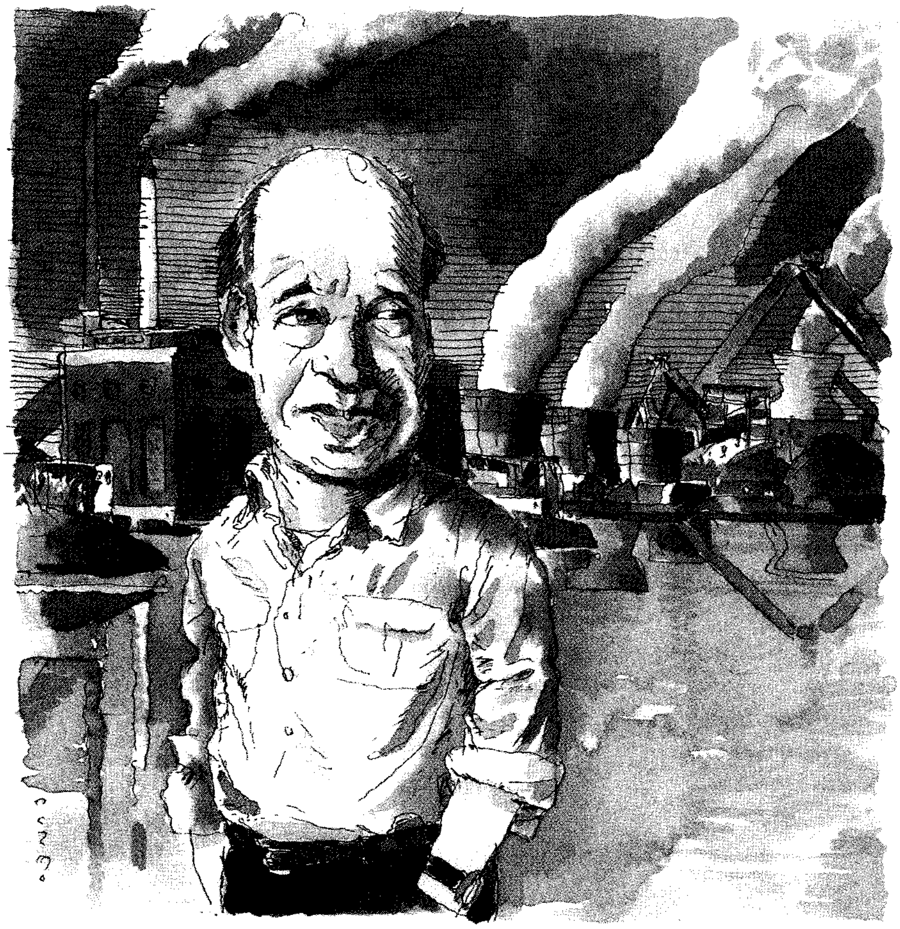
THE CATASTROPHIST

NASA's climate expert delivers the news no one wants to hear.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT



James Hansen on curbing coal emissions: "The science is clear. This is our one chance."

JOHN CUNEO

A few months ago, James Hansen, the director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, in Manhattan, took a day off from work to join a protest in Washington, D.C. The immediate target of the protest was the Capitol Power Plant, which supplies steam and chilled water to congressional offices, but more generally its object was coal, which is the world's leading source of greenhouse-gas emissions. As it happened, on the day of the protest it snowed. Hansen was wearing a trench coat and a wide-brimmed canvas boater. He had forgotten to bring gloves. His sister, who lives in D.C. and had come along to watch over him, told him that he looked like Indiana Jones.

The march to the power plant was to begin on Capitol Hill, at the Spirit of Justice Park. By the time Hansen arrived, thousands of protesters were already milling around, wearing green hard hats and carrying posters with messages like "Power Past Coal" and "Clean Coal Is Like Dry Water." Hansen was immediately surrounded by TV cameras.

"You are one of the preëminent climatologists in the world," one television reporter said. "How does this square with your science?"

"I'm trying to make clear what the connection is between the science and the policy," Hansen responded. "Somebody has to do it."

The reporter wasn't satisfied. "Civil disobedience?" he asked, in a tone of mock incredulity. Hansen said that he couldn't let young people put themselves on the line, "and then I stand back behind them."

The reporter still hadn't got what he wanted: "We've heard that you all are planning, even hoping, to get arrested today. Is that true?"

"I wouldn't hope," Hansen said. "But I do want to draw attention to the issue, whatever is necessary to do that."

Hansen, who is sixty-eight, has greenish eyes, sparse brown hair, and the distracted manner of a man who's just lost his wallet. (In fact, he frequently misplaces things, including, on occasion, his car.) Thirty years ago, he created one of the world's first climate models, nicknamed Model Zero, which he used to predict most of what has happened to the climate since. Sometimes he is referred to as the "father of global warming," and sometimes as the grandfather.

Hansen has now concluded, partly on the basis of his latest modelling efforts and partly on the basis of observations made by other scientists, that the threat of global warming is far greater than even he had suspected. Carbon dioxide isn't just approaching dangerous levels; it is already there. Unless immediate action is taken—including the shutdown of all the world's coal plants within the next two decades—the planet will be committed to change on a scale society won't be able to cope with. "This particular problem has become an emergency," Hansen said.

Hansen's revised calculations have prompted him to engage in activities—like marching on Washington—that aging government scientists don't usually go in for. Last September, he travelled to England to testify on behalf of anti-coal activists who were arrested while climbing the smokestack of a power station to spray-paint a message to the Prime Minister. (They were acquitted.) Speaking before a congressional special committee last year, Hansen asserted that fossil-fuel companies were knowingly spreading misinformation about global warming and that their chairmen "should be tried for high crimes against humanity and nature." He has compared freight trains carrying coal to "death trains," and wrote to the head of the National Mining Association, who sent him a letter of complaint, that if the comparison "makes you uncomfortable, well, perhaps it should."

Hansen insists that his intent is not to be provocative but conservative: his only aim is to preserve the world as we know it. "The science is clear," he said, when it was his turn to address the protesters blocking the entrance to the Capitol Power Plant. "This is our one chance."

The fifth of seven children, Hansen grew up in Denison, Iowa, a small, sleepy town close to the western edge of the state. His father was a tenant farmer who, after the Second World War, went to work as a bartender. All the kids slept in two rooms. As soon as he was old enough, Hansen went to work, too, delivering the Omaha *World-Herald*. When he was eighteen, he received a scholarship to attend the University of Iowa. It didn't cover housing, so he rented a room for twenty-five dollars a month and ate mostly cereal. He stayed on at the university to get a Ph.D. in physics, writing his dissertation on the atmosphere of Venus. From there he went directly to the Goddard Institute for Space Studies—GISS, for short—where he took up the study of Venusian clouds.

By all accounts, including his own, Hansen was preoccupied by his research and not much interested in anything else. GISS's offices are a few blocks south of Columbia University; when riots shut down the campus, in 1968, he barely noticed. At that point, GISS's computer was the fastest in the world, but it still had to be fed punch cards. "I was staying here late every night, reading in my decks of cards," Hansen recalled. In 1969, he left GISS for six months to study in the Netherlands. There he met his wife, Anniek, who is Dutch; the couple honeymooned in Florida, near Cape Canaveral, so they could watch an Apollo launch.

In 1973, the first Pioneer Venus mission was announced, and Hansen began designing an instrument—a polarimeter—to be carried on the orbiter. But soon his research interests began to shift earthward. A trio of chemists—they would later share a Nobel Prize—had discovered that chlorofluorocarbons and other man-made chemicals could break down the ozone layer. It had also become clear that greenhouse gases were rapidly building up in the atmosphere.

"We realized that we had a planet that was changing before our eyes, and that's more interesting," Hansen told me. The topic attracted him for much the same reason Venus's clouds had: there were new research questions to be answered. He decided to try to adapt a computer program that had been designed to forecast the weather to see if it could be used to look further into the future. What would happen to the earth if, for example, greenhouse-gas levels were to double?

"All in favor?"

"He never worked on any topic thinking it might be any use for the world," Anniek told me. "He just wanted to figure out the scientific meaning of it."

When Hansen began his modelling work, there were good theoretical reasons for believing that increasing CO_2 levels would cause the world to warm, but little empirical evidence. Average global temperatures had risen in the nineteen-thirties and forties; then they had declined, in some regions, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties. A few years into his project, Hansen concluded that a new pattern was about to emerge. In 1981, he became the director of GISS. In a paper published that year in *Science*, he forecast that the following decade would be unusually warm. (That turned out to be the case.) In the same paper, he predicted that the nineteen-nineties would be warmer still. (That also turned out to be true.) Finally, he forecast that by the end of the twentieth century a global-warming signal would emerge from the "noise" of natural climate variability. (This, too, proved to be correct.)

Later, Hansen became even more specific. In 1990, he bet a roomful of scientists that that year, or one of the following two, would be the warmest on record. (Within nine months, he had won the bet.) In 1991, he predicted that, owing to the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, in the Philippines, average global temperatures would drop and then, a few years later, recommence their upward climb, which was precisely what happened.

From early on, the significance of Hansen's insights was recognized by the scientific community. "The work that he did in the seventies, eighties, and nineties was absolutely groundbreaking," Spencer Weart, a physicist turned historian who has studied the efforts to understand climate change, told me. He added, "It does help to be right."

"I have a whole folder in my drawer labelled 'Canonical Papers,' Michael

Oppenheimer, a climate scientist at Princeton, said. "About half of them are Jim's."

Because of its implications for humanity, Hansen's work also attracted considerable attention from the world at large. His 1981 paper prompted the first front-page article on climate change that ran in the *Times*—"STUDY FINDS WARMING TREND THAT COULD RAISE SEA LEVELS," the headline read—and within a few years he was regularly being invited to testify before Congress. Still, Hansen says, he didn't imagine himself playing any role besides that of a research scientist. He is, he has written, "a poor communicator" and "not tactful."

"He's very shy," Ralph Cicerone, the president of the National Academy of Sciences, who has known Hansen for nearly forty years, told me. "And, as far as I can tell, he does not enjoy a lot of his public work."

"Jim doesn't really like to look at anyone," Anniek Hansen told me. "I say, 'Just look at them!' "

Throughout the nineteen-eighties and nineties, the evidence of climate change—and its potential hazards—continued to grow. Hansen kept expecting the political system to respond. This, after all, was what had happened with the ozone problem. Proof that chlorofluorocarbons were destroying the ozone layer came in 1985, when British scientists discovered that an ozone "hole" had opened up over Antarctica. The crisis was resolved—or, at least, prevented from growing worse—by an international treaty phasing out chlorofluorocarbons which was ratified in 1987.

"At first, Jim's work didn't take an activist bent at all," the writer Bill McKibben, who has followed Hansen's career for more than twenty years and helped organize the anti-coal protest in D.C., told me. "I think he thought, as did I, If we get this set of facts out in front of everybody, they're so powerful—overwhelming—that people will do what needs to be done. Of course, that was naïve on both our parts."

As recently as the George W. Bush Administration, Hansen was still operating as if getting the right facts in front of the right people would be enough. In 2001, he was invited to speak to Vice-President Dick Cheney and other high-level Administration officials. For the meeting, he prepared a detailed presentation titled "The Forcings Underlying Climate Change." In 2003, he was invited to Washington again, to meet with the head of the Council on Environmental Quality at the White House. This time, he offered a presentation on what ice-core records show about the sensitivity of the climate to changes in greenhouse-gas concentrations. But by 2004 the Administration had dropped any pretense that it was interested in the facts about climate change. That year, NASA, reportedly at the behest of the White House, insisted that all communications between GISS scientists and the outside world be routed through political appointees at the agency. The following year, the Administration prevented GISS from posting its monthly temperature data on its Web site, ostensibly on the ground that proper protocols had not been followed. (The data showed that 2005 was likely to be the warmest year on record.) Hansen was also told that he couldn't grant a routine interview to National Public Radio. When he spoke out about the restrictions, scientists at other federal agencies complained that they were being similarly treated and a new term was invented: government scientists, it was said, were being "Hansenized."

"He had been waiting all this time for global warming to become the issue that ozone was," Anniek Hansen told me. "And he's very patient. And he just kept on working and publishing, thinking that someone would do something." She went on, "He started speaking out, not because he thinks he's good at it, not because he enjoys it, but because of necessity."

"When Jim makes up his mind, he pursues whatever conclusion he has to the end point," Michael Oppenheimer said. "And he's made up his mind that you have to pull out all the stops at this point, and that all his scientific efforts would come to naught if he didn't also involve himself in political action." Starting in 2007, Hansen began writing to world leaders, including Prime Minister Gordon Brown, of Britain, and Yasuo Fukuda, then the Prime Minister of Japan. In December, 2008, he composed a personal appeal to Barack and Michelle Obama.

"A stark scientific conclusion, that we must reduce greenhouse gases below present amounts to preserve nature and humanity, has become clear," Hansen wrote. "It is still feasible to avert climate disasters, but only if policies are consistent with what science indicates to be required." Hansen gave the letter to Obama's chief science adviser, John Holdren, with whom he is friendly, and Holdren, he says, promised to deliver it. But Hansen never heard back, and by the spring he had begun to lose faith in the new Administration. (In an e-mail, Holdren said that he could not discuss "what I have or haven't given or said to the President.")

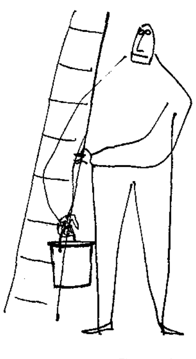
"I had had hopes that Obama understood the reality of the issue and would seize the opportunity to marry the energy and climate and national-security issues and make a very strong program," Hansen told me. "Maybe he still will, but I'm getting bad feelings about it."

There are lots of ways to lose an audience with a discussion of global warming, and new ones, it seems, are being discovered all the time. As well as anyone, Hansen ought to know this; still, he persists in trying to make contact. He frequently gives public lectures; just in the past few months, he has spoken to Native Americans in Washington, D.C.; college students at Dartmouth; high-school students in Copenhagen; concerned citizens, including King Harald, in Oslo; renewable-energy enthusiasts in Milwaukee; folk-music fans in Beacon, New York; and public-health professionals in Manhattan.

In April, I met up with Hansen at the state capitol in Concord, New Hampshire, where he had been invited to speak by local anti-coal activists. There had been only a couple of days to publicize the event; nevertheless, more than two hundred and fifty people showed up. I asked a woman from the town of Ossipee why she had come. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hear bad news straight from the horse's mouth," she said. For the event, Hansen had, as usual, prepared a PowerPoint presentation. It was projected onto a screen beside a faded portrait of George Washington. The first slide gave the title of the talk, "The Climate Threat to the Planet," along with the disclaimer "Any statements relating to policy are personal opinion."

Hansen likes to begin his talk with a highly compressed but still perilously long discussion of climate history, beginning in the early Eocene, some fifty million years ago. At that point, CO_2 levels were high and, as Hansen noted, the world was very warm: there was practically no ice on the planet, and palm trees grew in the Arctic. Then CO_2 levels began to fall. No one is entirely sure why, but one possible cause has to do with weathering processes that, over many millennia, allow carbon dioxide from the air to get bound up in limestone. As CO_2 levels declined, the planet grew cooler; Hansen flashed some slides on the screen, which showed that, between fifty million and thirty-five million years ago, deep-ocean temperatures dropped by more than ten degrees. Eventually, around thirty-four million years ago, temperatures sank low enough that glaciers began to form on Antarctica. By around three million years ago—perhaps earlier—permanent ice sheets had begun to form in the Northern Hemisphere as well. Then, about two million years ago, the world entered a period of recurring glaciations. During the ice ages—the most recent one ended about twelve thousand years ago—CO_2 levels dropped even further.

What is now happening, Hansen explained to the group in New Hampshire, is that climate history is being run in reverse and at high speed, like a cassette tape on rewind. Carbon dioxide is being pumped into the air some ten thousand times faster than natural weathering processes can remove it.



"So humans now are in charge of atmospheric composition," Hansen said. Then he corrected himself: "Well, we're determining it, whether we're in charge or not."

Among the many risks of running the system backward is that the ice sheets formed on the way forward will start to disintegrate. Once it begins, this process is likely to be self-reinforcing. "If we burn all the fossil fuels and put all that CO_2 into the atmosphere, we will be sending the planet back to the ice-free state," Hansen said. "It will take a while to get there—ice sheets don't melt instantaneously—but that's what we will be doing. And if you melt all the ice, sea levels will go up two hundred and fifty feet. So you can't do that without producing a different planet."

There's no precise term for the level of CO_2 that will assure a climate disaster; the best that scientists and policymakers have been able to come up with is the phrase "dangerous anthropogenic interference," or D.A.I. Most official discussions have been premised on the notion that D.A.I. will not be reached until CO_2 levels hit four hundred and fifty parts per million. Hansen, however, has concluded that the threshold for D.A.I. is much lower.

"The bad news is that it's become clear that the dangerous amount of carbon dioxide is no more than three hundred and fifty parts per million," he told the crowd in Concord. The *really* bad news is that CO_2 levels have already reached three hundred and eighty-five parts per million. (For the ten thousand years prior to the industrial revolution, carbon-dioxide levels were about two hundred and eighty parts per million, and if current emissions trends continue they will reach four hundred and fifty parts by around 2035.)

Once you accept that CO_2 levels are already too high, it's obvious, Hansen argues, what needs to be done. He displayed a chart of known fossil-fuel reserves represented in terms of their carbon content. There was a short bar for oil, a shorter bar for natural gas, and a tall bar for coal.

"We've already used about half of the oil," he observed. "And we're going to use all of the oil and natural gas that's easily available. It's owned by Russia and Saudi Arabia, and we can't tell them not to sell it. So, if you look at the size of these fossil-fuel reservoirs, it becomes very clear. The only way we can constrain the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is to cut off the coal source, by saying either we will leave the coal in the ground or we will burn it only at power plants that actually capture the CO_2." Such power plants are often referred to as "clean coal plants." Although there has been a great deal of talk about them lately, at this point there are no clean-coal plants in commercial operation, and, for a combination of technological and economic reasons, it's not clear that there ever will be.

Hansen continued, "If we had a moratorium on any new coal plants and phased out existing ones over the next twenty years, we could get back to three hundred and fifty parts per million within several decades." Reforestation, for example, if practiced on a massive scale, could begin to draw global CO_2 levels down, Hansen says, "so it's technically feasible." But "it requires us to take action promptly."

Coincidentally, that afternoon a vote was scheduled in the New Hampshire state legislature on a proposal involving the state's largest coal-fired power plant, the Merrimack Station, in the town of Bow. The station's owner was planning to spend several hundred million dollars to reduce mercury emissions from the plant—a cost that it planned to pass on to ratepayers. Hansen, who said he thought the plant should simply be shut, called the plan a "terrible waste of money." A lawmaker sympathetic to this view had introduced a bill calling for more study of the project, but, as several people who came up to speak to Hansen after his talk explained, it was opposed by the state's construction unions and seemed headed for defeat. (Less than an hour later, the bill was rejected in committee by a unanimous vote.)

"I assume you're used to telling policymakers the truth and then having them ignore you," one man said to Hansen.

Hansen smiled ruefully. "You're right."

In scientific circles, worries about D.A.I. are widespread. During the past few years, researchers around the world have noticed a disturbing trend: the planet is changing faster than had been anticipated. Antarctica, for example, had not been expected to show a net loss of ice for another century, but recent studies indicate that the continent's massive ice sheets are already shrinking. At the other end of the globe, the Arctic ice cap has been melting at a shocking rate; the extent of the summer ice is now only a little more than half of what it was just forty years ago. Meanwhile, scientists have found that the arid zones that circle the globe

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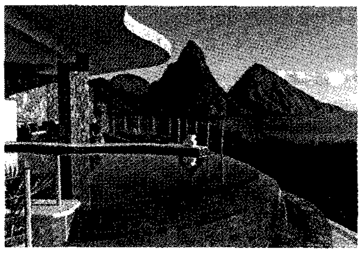

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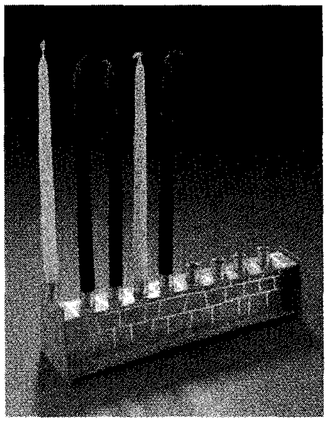

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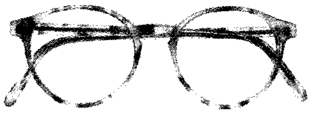

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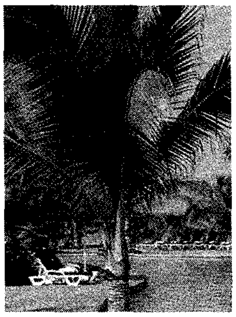

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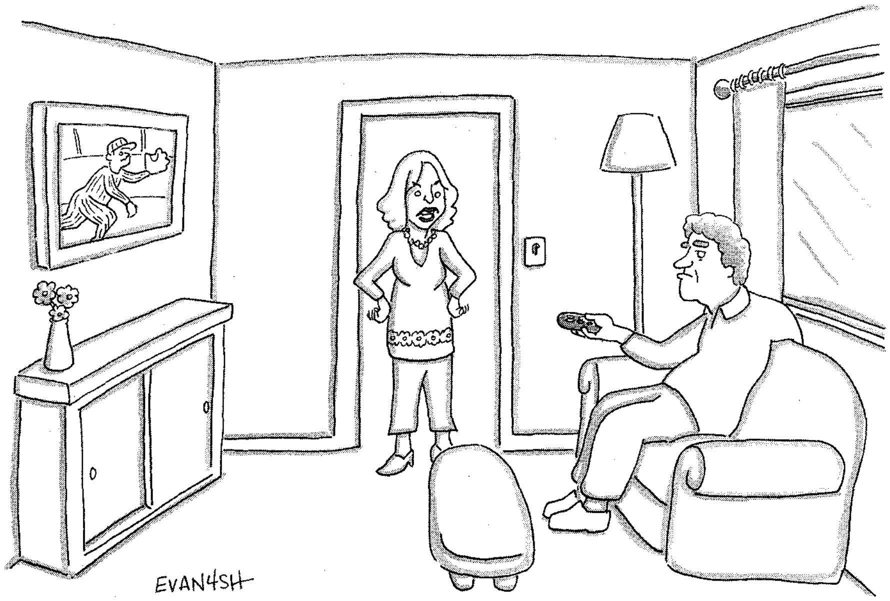

"I said I don't want to fight. That's your cue to apologize."

• •

north and south of the tropics have been expanding more rapidly than computer models had predicted. This expansion of the subtropics means that highly populated areas, including the American Southwest and the Mediterranean basin, are likely to suffer more and more frequent droughts.

"Certainly, I think the shrinking of the Arctic ice cap made a very strong impression on a lot of scientists," Spencer Weart, the physicist, told me. "And these things keep popping up. You think, What, another one? Another one? They're almost all in the wrong direction, in the direction of making the change worse and faster."

"In nearly all areas, the developments are occurring more quickly than had been assumed," Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, the head of Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, recently observed. "We are on our way to a destabilization of the world climate that has advanced much further than most people or their governments realize."

Obama's science adviser, John Holdren, a physicist on leave from Harvard, has said that he believes "any reasonably comprehensive and up-to-date look at the evidence makes clear that civilization has already generated dangerous anthropogenic interference in the climate system."

There is also broad agreement among scientists that coal represents the most serious threat to the climate. Coal now provides half the electricity in the United States. In China, that figure is closer to eighty per cent, and a new coal-fired power plant comes online every week or two. As oil supplies dwindle, there will still be plenty of coal, which could be—and in some places already is being—converted into a very dirty liquid fuel. Before Steven Chu, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, was appointed to his current post as Energy Secretary, he said in a speech, "There's enough carbon in the ground to really cook us. Coal is my worst nightmare." (These are lines that Hansen is fond of invoking.) A couple of months ago, seven prominent climate scientists from Australia wrote an open letter to the owners of that country's major utility companies urging that "no new coal-fired power stations, except ones that have ZERO emissions," be built. They also recommended an "urgent program" to phase out old plants.

"The unfortunate reality is that genuine action on climate change will require that existing coal-fired power stations cease to operate in the near future," the group wrote.

But if Hansen's anxieties about D.A.I. and coal are broadly shared, he is still, among climate scientists, an outlier. "Almost everyone in the scientific community is prepared to say that if we don't do something now to reverse the direction we're going in we either already are or will very, very soon be in the danger zone," Naomi Oreskes, a historian of science and a provost at the University of California at San Diego, told me. "But Hansen talks in stronger terms. He's using adjectives. He has started to speak in moral terms, and that always makes scientists uncomfortable."

Hansen is also increasingly isolated among climate activists. "I view Jim Hansen as heroic as a scientist," Eileen Claussen, the president of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, said. "He was there at the beginning, he's faced all kinds of pressures politically, and he's done a terrific job, I think, of keeping focussed. But I wish he would stick to what he really knows. Because I don't think he has a realistic view of what is politically possible, or what the best policies would be to deal with this problem."

In Washington, the only approach to limiting emissions that is seen as having any chance of being enacted is a so-called "cap and trade" system. Under such a system, the government would set an over-all cap for CO_2 emissions, then allocate allowances to major emitters, like power plants and oil refineries, which could be traded on a carbon market. In theory, at least, the system would discourage fossil-fuel use by making emitters pay for what they are putting out. But to the extent that such a system has been tried, by the members of the European Union, its results so far are inconclusive, and Hansen argues that it is essentially a sham. (He recently referred to it as "the Temple of Doom.") What is required, he insists, is a direct tax on carbon emissions. The tax should be significant at the start—equivalent to roughly a dollar per gallon for gasoline—and then grow steeper over time. The revenues from the tax, he believes, ought to be distributed back to Americans on a per-capita basis, so that households that use less energy would actually make money, even as those that use more would find it increasingly expensive to do so.

"The only defense of this monstrous absurdity that I have heard," Hansen wrote a few weeks ago, referring to a cap-and-trade system, "is 'Well, you are right, it's no good, but the train has left the station.' If the train has left, it had better be derailed soon or the planet, and all of us, will be in deep do-do."

GISS's headquarters, at 112th Street and Broadway, sits above Tom's Restaurant, the diner made famous by "Seinfeld" and Suzanne Vega. Hansen has occupied the same office, on the seventh floor, since he became the director of the institute, almost three decades ago. One day last month, I went to visit him there. Hansen told me that he had been trying to computerize his old files; still, the most striking thing about the spacious office, which is largely taken up by three wooden tables, is that every available surface is covered with stacks of paper.

During the week, Hansen lives in an apartment just a few blocks from his office, but on weekends he and Anniek frequently go to an eighteenth-century house that they own in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and their son and daughter, who have children of their own, come to visit. Hansen dotes on his grandchildren—in many hours of conversation with me, just about the only time that he spoke with unalloyed enthusiasm was when he discussed planting trees with them this spring—and he claims they are the major reason for his activism. "I decided that I didn't want my grandchildren to say, 'Opa understood what was happening, but he didn't make it clear,'" he explained.

The day that I visited Hansen's office, the House Energy and Commerce Committee was beginning its markup of a cap-and-trade bill co-sponsored by the committee's chairman, Henry Waxman, of California. The bill—the American Clean Energy and Security Act—has the stated goal of cutting the country's carbon emissions by seventeen per cent by 2020. It is the most significant piece of climate legislation to make it this far in the House. Hansen pointed out that the bill explicitly allows for the construction of new coal plants and predicted that it would, if passed, prove close to meaningless. He said that he thought it would probably be best if the bill failed, so that Congress could "come back and do it more sensibly."

I said that if the bill failed I thought it was more likely Congress would let the issue drop, and that was one reason most of the country's major environmental groups were backing it.

"This is just stupidity on the part of environmental organizations in Washington," Hansen said. "The fact that some of these organizations have become part of the Washington 'go along, get along' establishment is very unfortunate."

Hansen argues that politicians willfully misunderstand climate science; it could be argued that Hansen just as willfully misunderstands politics. In order to stabilize carbon-dioxide levels in the atmosphere, annual global emissions would have to be cut by something on the order of three-quarters. In order to draw them down, agricultural and forestry practices would have to change dramatically as well. So far, at least, there is no evidence that any nation is willing to take anything approaching the necessary steps. On the contrary, almost all the trend lines point in the opposite direction. Just because the world desperately needs a solution that satisfies both the scientific and the political constraints doesn't mean one necessarily exists.

For his part, Hansen argues that while the laws of geophysics are immutable, those of society are ours to determine. When I said that it didn't seem feasible to expect the United States to give up its coal plants, he responded, "We can point to other countries being fifty per cent more energy-efficient than we are. We're getting fifty per cent of our electricity from coal. That alone should provide a pretty strong argument."

Then what about China and India?

Both countries are likely to suffer very severely from dramatic climate change, he said. "They're going to recognize that. In fact, they already are beginning to recognize that.

"It's not unrealistic," he went on. "But the policies have to push us in that direction. And, as long as we let the politicians and the people who are supporting them continue to set the rules, such that 'business as usual' continues, or small tweaks to 'business as usual,' then it is unrealistic. So we have to change the rules." He said that he was thinking of attending another demonstration soon, in West Virginia coal country. ♦

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THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

ANGELO'S ASHES

The man who became the face of the financial crisis.

BY CONNIE BRUCK

Six years ago, Countrywide Financial Corporation was regarded with awe in the business world. *Fortune* published a story in September, 2003, called "Meet the 23,000% Stock," which said that Countrywide had "the best stock market performance of any financial services company in the Fortune 500, measured from the start of the Great Bull Market over two decades ago." Shareholders who had invested a thousand dollars in 1982 would in 2003 have more than two hundred and thirty thousand dollars. *Fortune* also noted that Countrywide was expected that year to write four hundred billion dollars in home loans and earn $1.9 billion—far exceeding the profits of Walt Disney and McDonald's. (Countrywide surpassed expectations, earning $2.4 billion.) No one had greater esteem for Countrywide's success than Angelo Mozilo, its self-regarding chairman and C.E.O. "I love Warren," he would sometimes say, before pointing out that an investor in Countrywide would have done far better than an investor in Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway.

Mozilo did rather well himself. In 2003, he received nearly thirty-three million dollars in compensation, which included an allotment for his personal use of the company jet and more than ninety-five thousand dollars in country-club fees. It was important to him that his compensation be comparable to that of C.E.O.s of leading investment banks. Wall Street's white-shoe bankers had long looked down on Mozilo, the mortgage banker from Los Angeles, with his gold necklace, white-collared shirts, hand-tailored suits, and fancy cars. They disliked his swagger, and they didn't invite him to join their private clubs. But by 2003 Wall Street had become addicted to home loans, which bankers used to create immensely lucrative mortgage-backed securities and, later, collateralized debt obligations, or C.D.O.s—and Countrywide was their biggest supplier. Suddenly, Mozilo seemed almost an insider.

Mozilo had gained full control of Countrywide in 2000, after the retirement of his partner, David Loeb, and he relished the freedom. The company had recently moved its corporate headquarters from Pasadena to Calabasas, an hour's drive north of downtown Los Angeles, where it occupied a sprawling Mediterranean-style villa at the foot of the Santa Monica Mountains. The senior executives' offices were on the third floor, where the corridors were lined with Hudson River School paintings, by Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, and others. In the executive dining room, lunch was served each day, at a long table that seated twenty, with Mozilo at the head. He had made hundreds of powerful friends over the years (including Jim Johnson, the former head of Fannie Mae; Vernon Jordan, the attorney; Ken Langone, a co-founder of Home Depot; and Jerry Weintraub, the Hollywood producer). If any friends needed mortgages, he assured them that they would be well treated, and directed them to the loan program known inside Countrywide as Friends of Angelo. Mozilo's personal loan program, however, was not restricted to the élite; F.O.A. members included a chef Mozilo liked, a waitress who had served him, his tailor, a New York taxi driver who had picked him up, a caddie he'd met on a golf course, and many others whom the inveterate salesman happened to come across.

Under Mozilo's leadership, Countrywide's growth had been astonishing. Between 2000 and 2003, the company tripled its workforce, to more than thirty-four thousand. The company changed its name from Countrywide Credit Industries to Countrywide Financial Corporation—a proclamation that it was no longer a mere mortgage company. A full-fledged diversified financial-services company, it owned a bank, sold title insurance, and traded securities. Mortgages, however, remained the core of its business, and, according to *Inside Mortgage Finance*, it was the third-largest home-loan provider in America, after Wells Fargo and Washington Mutual. Mozilo wanted Countrywide, which he always referred to as his "baby," to be No. 1, a position it occupied briefly, in the early nineties, before being overtaken by the competition. Mozilo was aiming to achieve a market share—thirty to forty per cent—that was far greater than anyone in the financial-services industry had ever attained. If he succeeded, Countrywide's rivals would be severely diminished and its continued hegemony assured. Mozilo had always wanted to build a company that would last a century or more.

For several years, Countrywide continued to thrive. In 2004, the company edged out Wells Fargo to become the largest home-mortgage provider. In 2005, *Fortune* placed Countrywide on its list of "Most Admired Companies," and *Barron's* named Mozilo one of the thirty best C.E.O.s in the world. The following year, *American Banker* presented him with a lifetime-achievement award. But, as 2007 progressed, subprime defaults escalated rapidly, and Wall Street bankers abandoned the mortgage-backed securities they had prized, and their supplier, too. In August, they cut off Countrywide's short-term funding, a move that constricted its ability to operate, and a few months later Mozilo was forced to choose between bankruptcy or being acquired by Bank of America. (In January, 2008, Bank of America announced that it would buy the company for four billion dollars, a fraction of what Countrywide was worth at its peak.)

Angelo Mozilo has reportedly been named a defendant in more than a hundred civil lawsuits and a target of a criminal investigation. On June 4th, the Securities and Exchange Commission, in a civil suit,

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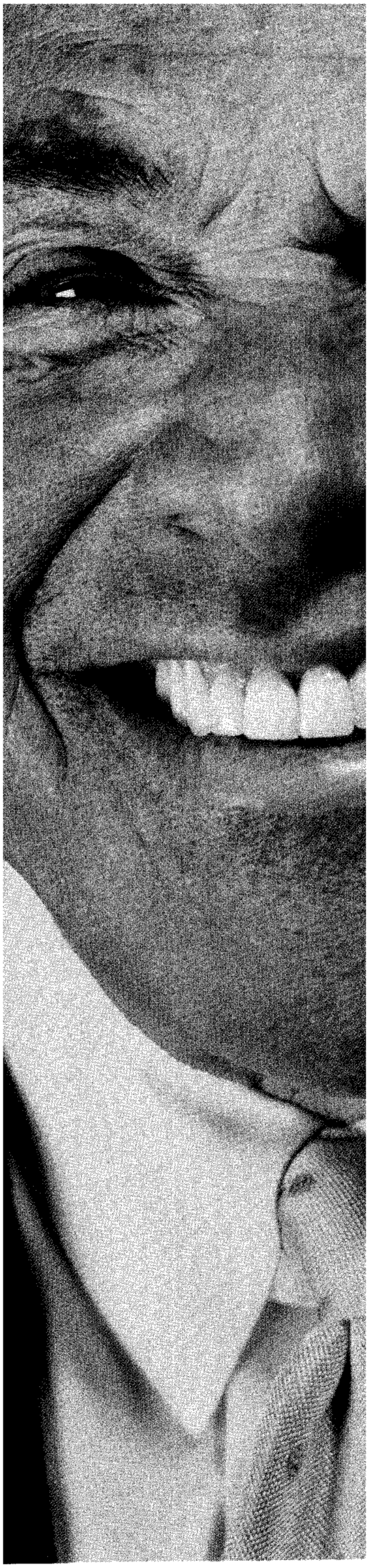

'You need to make dust or eat dust, and I d

charged Mozilo, David Sambol (a former president of Countrywide), and Eric Sieracki (its former chief financial officer) with securities fraud, alleging that they had hidden the high-risk nature of Countrywide's loan products from investors. Mozilo was also charged with insider trading. E-mails quoted in the complaint showed Mozilo privately deploring the high-risk loans that had become Countrywide's stock-in-trade while in public he was praising his company's high standards. The complaint seemed to formalize a public indictment of Mozilo as an icon of corporate malfeasance and greed, the chief villain at the center of the economy's collapse. Mozilo is hardly a scapegoat, but his misdeeds, as real as they are, have overshadowed those of C.E.O.s at other failed institutions, like Bear Stearns, Merrill Lynch, and Lehman Brothers, all heavy players in high-risk subprime loans. In January, Senator Charles Schumer, a member of the Senate banking committee, who had for many months remained silent on the subject of the Wall Street bankers who are his major contributors, declared that he wanted to see Mozilo "boiled in oil. Figuratively."

These days, Mozilo, who is seventy, spends most of his time at home, in a large Spanish-style house in a guarded, gated community at the Sherwood Country Club, near the golf course where Countrywide used to co-sponsor the Target World Challenge with Tiger Woods. Mozilo's world has become more circumscribed. The former news junkie is so angered by the media's coverage of him that he has given up the New York *Times*, the Los Angeles *Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, and reads only the *Financial Times*. The ranks of his friends have thinned, and some who remain tell him that they nearly get into fights defending him. He has received numerous death threats. Mozilo has aged considerably, and he no longer flashes what a former employee described as his "ten-thousand-watt smile."

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R. Chast

Angelo Mozilo started working in his father's butcher shop, in the Bronx, when he was ten years old. At fourteen, he got a job as a messenger at a small mortgage firm in midtown Manhattan and was soon promoted. He saw the job as a way to escape from the life intended for him. His father, who was the son of an Italian immigrant, and who had not graduated from high school, wanted him to join him in the butcher shop rather than attend college. But his mother had been an avid student, and never got over the day her father took her out of the ninth grade when a schoolmate became pregnant, and sent her to work in a factory, sewing zippers into skirts. She was determined that her children go to college, and all five of them did.

Mozilo graduated from Fordham, in the Bronx, in 1960. That year, he met David Loeb, who owned a mortgage company that had merged with the firm that had employed Mozilo since he was a teen-ager. The new company sent Mozilo first to Virginia Beach and then to Orlando. He had never lived outside the Bronx, and years later he told friends that it had been difficult to be a dark-skinned Italian-American in these communities. In Virginia Beach, the local club where businesspeople congregated refused to admit him, and in Orlando he had trouble selling mortgages until he met a group of Jewish homebuilders who couldn't get financing. As his sister, Lori, told me, "Angelo said, 'Nobody wants to work with you. Nobody wants to work with me. Let's do it together.' He was always this Italian guy people didn't want to accept." She went on, "When he tans he gets really dark. My mother told me that when he worked in Florida he was asked to sit in the back of the bus."

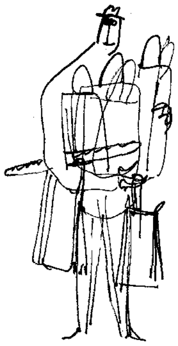
In 1968, Loeb, who was fifteen years older than Mozilo, proposed that they create a new mortgage company together. Loeb told *National Mortgage News* that Mozilo "was a performer in a business where there are few performers."

They planned the company at the kitchen table in Loeb's Park Avenue apartment. Loeb said he would invest three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and Mozilo would invest a hundred thousand; Mozilo had only twenty-five thousand dollars in savings, so he borrowed seventy-five thousand from a banker he'd met in Florida. Loeb sent Mozilo to Los Angeles—then, as now, about twenty-five per cent of all mortgages were issued in California—to open a small office on Wilshire Boulevard. In the first few years, Mozilo could not afford to bring his wife and small children out from the Bronx, and the fledgling company, incongruously named Countrywide, barely survived.

But Loeb and Mozilo took a fresh approach to the business of mortgage banking, and by the late seventies their efforts were beginning to pay off. "Countrywide was a David who slew Goliaths," Sy Jacobs, a former Wall Street analyst, who began following Countrywide in the nineteen-eighties, said. "It was a smaller, more nimble, cutting-edge company that was competing at great disadvantage and economies of scale against giants of the industry, and somehow it bested everybody, with efficiency and a singular focus." Regarding the company's big, diversified rivals, Countrywide's message was "This whole idea of being a financial supermarket is nonsense," he went on. "We think about one thing: making mortgages at the lowest cost possible, without taking risk."

Countrywide was a mortgage bank, and, unlike commercial banks and thrifts, was not licensed to take deposits, so it funded its home loans by borrowing money, short term. It originated mortgages, quickly sold them to other institutions—for many years, its biggest buyers were Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Ginnie Mae—and continued to service them. By eliminating a commissioned sales force, Countrywide was able to lower the price of its loans. In the eighties, it automated much of the loan process, using computers at a time when few other lenders did; Mozilo liked to say that Countrywide was a technology company that did mortgage banking.

Unlike the reticent Loeb, who rarely came to the office, preferring to communicate with his lieutenants by phone, Mozilo enjoyed motivating employees, delivering speeches, and talking to analysts and the press. He ran the company as though he were its sole proprietor, even keeping track of employees who arrived late to work. In the mid-nineties, after losing first place, Mozilo saw his company as being engaged in a fierce contest for industry dominance. "The competitors are taking food out of our mouths!" Mozilo protested. "Look across the street at that person walking into Wells Fargo," he urged employees. "That's a gift you don't get to buy for your child!" He became enraged if he suspected that a key employee might not share his drive. As he told an executive, "If you ever stop trying to make your division the biggest and the best, that's the day you die!" If an employee came to him and confessed to considering a divorce, he counselled against it. (Mozilo and his wife, Phyllis, met in the Bronx and married when they were in their early twenties; they have five children and nine grandchildren. Mozilo sometimes remarked that many of his friends in business had second or third wives who were tall and blond, and he had trouble telling them apart.)



But Loeb controlled much of the company. He was its strategist and risk manager, and Mozilo its chief salesman. "Dave was a numbers guy, an ornery personality, who was generally suspicious of the production side of the company," a former senior Countrywide executive said. "That kept the production people from taking over the operation." Younger executives, who mainly saw Loeb at the company's annual retreat, at the Ojai Valley Inn, found him a remote, somewhat opaque figure, but his view of risk was clear. One executive recalled Loeb's admonition at those meetings: "He would say, 'Keep your powder dry—and live to fight another day.'" Loeb's caution was most apparent in the early nineties, when, as subprime mortgages became a lucrative business, Countrywide refused to offer these riskier loans.

Shortly after starting Countrywide, Mozilo told Loeb that he wanted all of Countrywide's employees to feel that mortgages were not just loans but a way of improving people's lives. The company, he believed, should make special efforts to lower the barrier for minorities and others who had been excluded from homeownership, arguing that this was not just altruism but a sound business plan; once the company was about more than making money, it would make money. Loeb was unmoved, but he did not object. In the thousands of speeches that Mozilo gave over the years, he almost always described himself as the son of a Bronx butcher whose family was too poor to own a home.

Despite Mozilo's ideals, Countrywide did not have a strong record of lending to minorities. In 1992, shortly after Mozilo became chairman of the Mortgage Bankers Association, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston issued a report stating that it had found systemic discrimination by mortgage lenders against African-American and Hispanic borrowers. Robert Gnaizda, former general counsel of the Greenlining Institute, a nonprofit organization focussed on minority rights, sent the report to Mozilo and other mortgage bankers. "I received a harsh response from Mozilo," Gnaizda told me. Privately, however, Mozilo was appalled. He ordered that all Countrywide's records on rejected minority applicants be sent to him, and he retroactively approved about half of them. Then he dispatched African-Americans, posing as prospective borrowers—he called them "mystery shoppers"—to Countrywide branches, and concluded that they were indeed treated differently from white borrowers.

Countrywide opened new offices in inner-city areas, created counselling centers, and loosened some lending standards, to include borrowers with less than pristine credit histories. Between 1993 and 1994, the company's loans to African-American borrowers rose three hundred and twenty-five per cent, and to Hispanics they increased a hundred and sixty-three per cent. In 1994, Countrywide became the first mortgage lender to sign a fair-lending agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Countrywide went from close to the bottom in lending to minorities to near the top," Gnaizda said. "I remember

Mozilo telling me, 'I don't want to narrow the gap in lending to minorities, I want to end it.'"

Eventually, subprime loans became too attractive a business for Countrywide to resist. In September, 1996, it created a new subsidiary for these loans, called Full Spectrum Lending; if the loans performed poorly, the Countrywide brand would not be tarnished. "It was a careful entry, considered closely by those at the top of the company," a former high-level Countrywide executive recalled. "We sat together and asked each other, 'Would you make this loan with your money?'" To offset the credit risk posed by subprime lending, the company required borrowers to make a substantial equity investment, ranging from fifteen to thirty-five per cent.

By early 1998, Full Spectrum had thirty offices in seventeen states, and subprime loans accounted for about six per cent of Countrywide's mortgages. Michael McMahon, a private investor and former equity analyst who followed Countrywide for more than twenty years, recalled, "Angelo said that he believed that over time the mortgage industry would not be segregated between prime and subprime. There was a wide variety of borrowers out there, but they all, within reason, needed to be serviced. So why not make them a loan and charge them a higher rate? He wanted to have a product set that would serve everybody."

In some ways, Countrywide seemed to be moving closer to the big companies whose methods Mozilo had scorned. He had often derided his competitors for relying on commissioned salespeople, whom he referred to as "loan hacks"; he had dispensed with them in the seventies, in part because he feared that a salesperson working on commission might say or do anything to make a sale. But as major banks, including Chase and Wells Fargo, expanded their mortgage-lending operations, Joe Anderson, the head of Countrywide's retail division, concluded that the operations of the company's small branch offices were too limiting. He proposed reviving the use of a commissioned sales force.

Anderson knew that challenging Mozilo was a dangerous proposition. In 1994, Mozilo had instructed his managers to cut costs, and Anderson wrote a memo suggesting that several branch offices be closed. Mozilo had summoned him to the boardroom, where he rolled up the memo and, brandishing it, berated Anderson, saying that closing an office was a public acknowledgment of weakness. Then he left the room, telling Anderson to wait there. Hours passed. Eventually, Anderson learned that Mozilo had left the building.

Still, with the blessing of Stanford Kurland, Countrywide's president, Anderson began to reinstate a commissioned sales force. Observing this effort, Mozilo asked Anderson, "Is this revolution or evolution?," but he eventually supported the idea. "Angelo was a reactive kind of guy," a former Countrywide executive recalled. "He'd tell me to get screwed, but then he'd come back the next day and say, 'You know, you're right, I'm wrong. I've decided we're going to do it your way.'"

In 2000, Loeb was seventy-six, and was suffering from neuropathy. Mozilo was tired of waiting to assume full control, according to a company insider, and he and Loeb quarrelled. One day, Loeb, without notifying Countrywide's board, sold all his shares in the company and resigned. Mozilo and Loeb didn't speak again until July, 2003. Loeb was dying, and Mozilo went to see him. He later told friends that Loeb said that he was proud of him—something that he had never said in the forty years they had worked together.

By 2004, Countrywide had become a leading U.S. mortgage lender to what it called "multicultural market communities." Mozilo always described Countrywide's inclusion of minority and immigrant populations as both business and mission, and he had become perhaps the single most important advocate of those who believed in advancing homeownership as a means of achieving a more equitable society. In February, 2003, when he delivered the prestigious Dunlop Lecture for Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, in Washington, D.C., he said, "The gap between low-income and minority homeownership, and what is classified as white homeownership, remains intolerably too wide." But he also had a more pragmatic rationale: minority owners were the country's fastest-growing group seeking mortgages, and the key to gaining market share. Mozilo made the point succinctly: "When you have almost eighty per cent white homeownership, there is not much opportunity there. Where you have forty-seven per cent Hispanic homeownership, that is where the economic opportunity is."

For Mozilo, market share had become an imperative. In 2002, he and his senior executives held a series of strategic-planning sessions with Eric Flamholtz, a U.C.L.A. business professor who had worked for the company as a consultant since the late nineties. Flamholtz referred to Mozilo's team as the Northridge Mafia—men who were, in outlook, much like their boss. "They had all gone to Cal State, Northridge—not U.C.L.A. or U.S.C.," he said. "And their attitude was 'We'll show 'em!' They were very smart, very competitive, very tough." During the meetings, Mozilo and his executives complained that Countrywide's share price didn't adequately reflect its strong earnings. Flamholtz told them that, if they expanded their market share, analysts would raise their rating of the stock. He argued that most industries eventually evolve into classic oligopolies, with one company commanding more than forty per cent of market share, a second controlling more than twenty per cent, a third having ten per cent, and the rest being boutiques. That year, Countrywide had a market share of almost ten per cent, and no one in the industry had more than thirteen per cent. Mozilo liked the idea. "You need to make dust or eat dust, and I don't like eating dust," he would say. In subsequent sessions, the executive committee agreed on a private five-year goal of about thirty per cent.

Mozilo and some of his executives believed they were in a new era, in which limits had become obsolete. In 2001, the Federal Reserve began cutting interest rates dramatically, bringing them to their lowest point in forty years and fuelling a boom cycle, particularly for mortgage lenders. And Countrywide had a ready market for its enormous volume of mortgages in Wall Street, which supplanted Fannie Mae as the company's biggest buyer. "We frankly can't produce enough product for that market to be satisfied," Mozilo commented in April, 2003.

A few months later, during a conference call to discuss the company's earnings, an analyst asked Mozilo whether he thought that Countrywide could increase its market share. Mozilo replied that he believed thirty per cent was a realistic goal. In September, at a Lehman Brothers Financial Services Conference, he stated, "For us to achieve what we want to achieve, to dominate [this business], we need a minimum of thirty per cent market share. We're halfway there by the end of this year and we expect ... to be the No. 1 player by 2008. I think it'll take somewhere between thirty-five and forty per cent share to do that."

"Angelo jumped the gun. He announced the thirty per cent," Flamholtz told me, somewhat defensively. "People at Countrywide were really upset. They were saying, 'No one's ever done this. Why did you announce it?' But that's Angelo. I had said that he should announce about twenty per cent less than his goal actually was. This way, there was no slack. There was big pressure, once he'd stated it publicly. It was 'We got to do this.'"

"I've considered portraiture, but everyone is so ugly."

* * *

David Sambol, a fine-featured, dark-haired man with a sharp gaze, was Mozilo's lieutenant in this expansion. He had joined Countrywide in 1985 and become the head of production in 2000, when he was forty. Many of Sambol's colleagues were impressed by his intellect and knowledge of mortgages, and intimidated by his aggressiveness. "If I had a sales team and wanted to get something hard done, I'd hire Dave Sambol—as long as he had very clear guidelines on what the rules are," the company insider told me. "He is really talented. Extremely smart, dogged, determined, just a relentless negotiator, driven to make money." Sambol's zeal for obtaining market share seemed to match Mozilo's. "It was like throwing gas on a fire," one of Sambol's former colleagues said.

Sambol frequently said, "Price any loan!" If the loan was risky, the borrower would simply have to pay more, within Countrywide's now expanding underwriting guidelines. Nick Krsnich, the company's chief investment officer, was an outspoken critic of what he perceived as Sambol's drive for market share at any cost. As Countrywide widened its guidelines, and because of the intensity of competition with other lenders, Krsnich argued, the company was not being adequately compensated for the risks it was taking. In executive-committee meetings, Krsnich challenged the thirty-per-cent market-share goal. Why, he asked, was it so important to dominate every other lender in the market—what more did they have to prove?

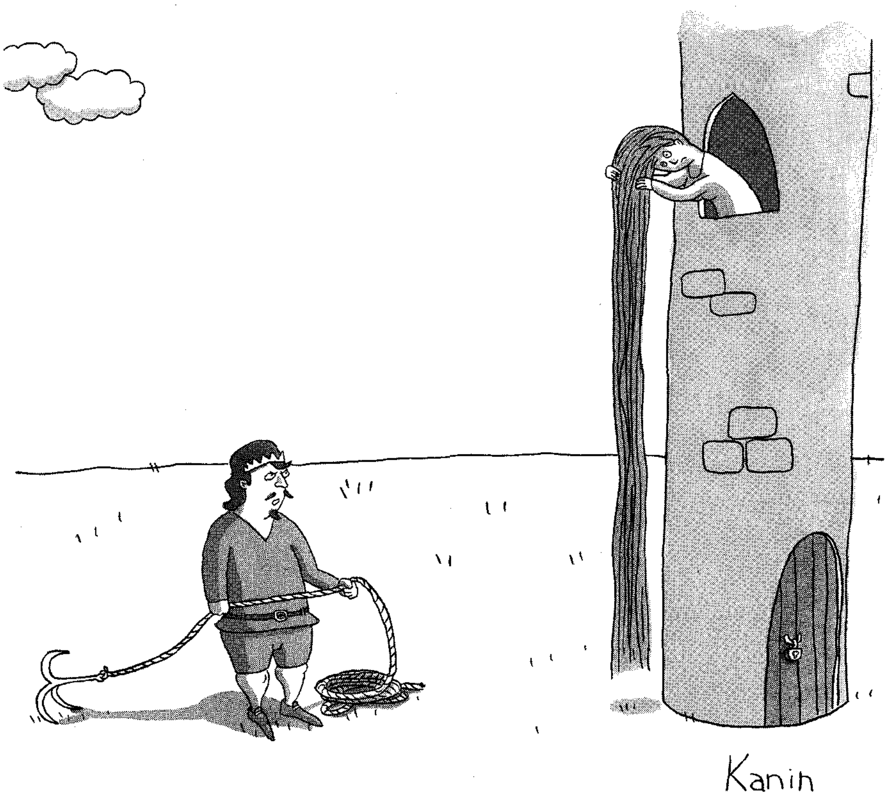
In late 2003, Sambol held a meeting with dozens of executives, mainly from the production division, to discuss narrowing the gap between Countrywide's products and guidelines and those of its competitors. He invited Krsnich to attend. According to several former executives, Krsnich became frustrated, feeling that Sambol was exceeding his authority. The exchange grew heated. Finally, Krsnich said, "This is all bullshit!" and left the room. Sambol went to Kurland, the company's president, to demand that Krsnich be fired; Kurland refused.

By 2004, Krsnich, a student of boom-and-bust cycles, was telling colleagues that he thought the company should prepare for a possible collapse in the mortgage market. Lenders' credit standards were declining, as were the premiums they were paid by borrowers for risk. As homes kept rising in value, owners could refinance their mortgages or take out home-equity loans. Some refinanced a few times a year, taking cash out of their homes to keep making mortgage payments, or to pay down other debts. Investors, meanwhile, were paying more for mortgage-backed securities and C.D.O.s than was warranted, because they had not analyzed the risk but simply relied on triple-A ratings. The rating agencies were paid for their appraisals by the banks that issued the securities, and the entire construct was based on the assumption that home prices would continue to rise. Some financial analysts outside Countrywide were also warning of a housing bubble, but Mozilo was not persuaded. "I don't believe there's any bubble out there," he declared in June, 2004.

Through 2004 and 2005, home prices continued to increase, driven in part by the unprecedented access to financing. Some of Countrywide's loans were seen as "affordability" products, which enabled borrowers to buy homes that would otherwise have been beyond their reach. "Pay option" adjustable-rate mortgages were just what they sounded like: a borrower had the option to pay very little, at a low teaser rate; all those unpaid balances would eventually come due, however, and the rate would be reset—leading to a borrowers' condition that has become known as "payment shock." Many of these loans required no documentation, meaning that borrowers could simply state their income, without providing verification. Some loan types were supposed to be offered only to borrowers with high credit scores; but often credit scores were inflated, because people had avoided defaulting on their credit cards or other debt by refinancing their homes. And the company was issuing subprime loans not with about twenty per cent down, as it had in the nineties, but with zero down; subprime borrowers would often take out what were known as "80/20" loans—a first lien loan for eighty per cent of the purchase price, and a second for twenty. "We had reached a point where the question was, What will we do next—pay borrowers to take loans?" the former senior Countrywide executive said.

Sambol often said that Countrywide should be "the supermarket of products," offering any product on any terms that a competitor did. "This is almost religious with him," Mozilo said of Sambol in March, 2006. "He firmly believes we should be able to offer . . . a competitive product in every type of mortgage financing that's available in the world." Not everyone in the company agreed. As the S.E.C. complaint noted, John McMurray, Countrywide's chief risk officer, warned repeatedly in 2005 and 2006 that the company's underwriting standards were being compromised by these attempts to match the most aggressive mortgage lenders.

Mozilo now saw the sales force as key to gaining market share, and it became increasingly powerful. Stationed across the country, salespeople would see products and prices offered by other lenders, and notify their superiors that they needed to offer them, too. Subprime loans were especially lucrative for Countrywide, because Wall Street wanted the riskier, higher-yielding loans, and salespeople were paid larger commissions for originating them. There were no ceilings to these commissions, and many salespeople were making millions of dollars each year. According to a former Countrywide compliance officer, some borrowers who could have qualified for prime loans were steered into the more expensive subprime loans instead. Referring to the empowered sales force, the price-any-loan tactic, the weakened guidelines, and the dangerous loan products, another former Countrywide executive said that the thirty-per-cent-market-share approach "drove almost everything the company did."



"Sure, sure, we have to do everything your way."

Stan Kurland was to succeed Mozilo as C.E.O. when he retired, in December, 2006, a plan that had been approved by Countrywide's board. "I called Stan the secret weapon of Countrywide," Flamholtz, the U.C.L.A. consultant, told me. "He's an unassuming guy, but he was the brains behind so much. Of the triumvirate—Angelo, Stan, Dave Sambol—Stan was really the strategic visionary."

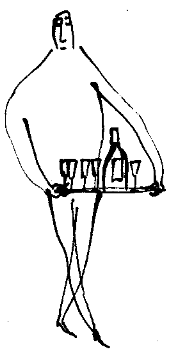
Like Mozilo, Kurland had been waiting a long time to gain control of the company. But now that his ascension was set, his influence seemed to wane. In early 2005, with interest rates steadily rising, Kurland sent a memo to senior managers, saying that the boom was plainly over, and that it was time for the company to tighten its guidelines and plan for reduced volume. Countrywide's market-share gains had slowed—its share was now 14.2 per cent—and the company had announced that it would not achieve its thirty-per-cent goal by 2008, as planned, but, rather, by 2010 or 2011. His memo was ignored.

Kurland had been a supporter of Sambol for many years, but now he felt threatened by Sambol's closeness to Mozilo and by his fierce ambition. The two men were very different. Kurland was mild-mannered and analytical, with a laconic demeanor that masked strong emotions; Sambol was arrogant, volatile, and uninhibited. They disagreed about the company's relationship with its joint regulators, the Federal Reserve and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. According to former colleagues, Sambol resented the regulators' intrusiveness, while Kurland placed a high premium on their input. Mozilo, for his part, called some of the regulators' concerns "much ado about nothing." He decided that Countrywide should try to switch regulators, leaving the Fed and the O.C.C. for the weaker Office of Thrift Supervision (O.T.S.). As Mozilo explained, "The conversion to a savings-bank charter better aligns the regulatory supervision of the company with our strategic objectives." Sambol endorsed the idea, which Kurland decried as regulator-shopping.

Under the existing system, banks may choose their own regulators, which in turn are funded by the fees that the banks pay; the O.T.S. had lobbied Countrywide to make the switch. (Last week, the Obama Administration proposed several regulatory reforms, including the elimination of the O.T.S., which had not managed to prevent the failure of numerous institutions under its aegis—including Countrywide, IndyMac, and Washington Mutual.) According to Sambol's lawyer, an examiner at the Fed had suggested that the company might be better suited to O.T.S. regulation. The lawyer added, "The consensus view to switch to O.T.S. was not based in any way on an assumption that O.T.S. would be a more permissive regulator."

In October, 2005, Kurland's fears were confirmed. A story in *National Mortgage News* reported that Mozilo's likely successor was either Kurland or Sambol, and that Mozilo "cites his loyalty to both executives." "The front-runner was always Stan, and the dark horse was Dave Sambol," McMahon, the former equity analyst, told me. "He was very, very aggressive, and closer to being like Angelo than Stan was." He added, "As Countrywide got caught up in this wave, the one person who had a larger and larger voice in steering the company was Sambol."

About six weeks later, Kurland sent Mozilo an emotional memo. According to Mozilo's contract, although he was to retire as C.E.O. in 2006, he would remain at the company as chairman until 2011. Kurland said that he could not accept this arrangement, and that when Mozilo stepped down as C.E.O. he would have to allow Kurland to assume full responsibility. He could not maintain his office at Countrywide, and he could not function as the company's spokesman. Soon after, Mozilo and Kurland had a nasty confrontation; Mozilo then forwarded Kurland's memo to the board. "Stan didn't use the discretion and people skills that he could have, when there's a forty-some-year founder of the company, an Italian butcher's son, who's got a chip on his shoulder anyway," the company insider said. "Stan was very clumsy in the way he did it—and that led right into Angelo's real feelings that he didn't want to leave." He added that Mozilo's plan to retire had been formed when he was not well; now that he was feeling better, he wanted to stay. Mozilo and Kurland "went for the next nine months without speaking," the company insider continued. "Stupidest thing in the world, where you have the two top people in a company that aren't speaking to one another. Both were told on numerous occasions to be adults."



Nick Krsnich, meanwhile, had decided to leave the company. In March, 2006, he went to say goodbye to Mozilo. According to a friend of Krsnich's, Mozilo asked what he would do about the succession, if he were in Mozilo's place. Krsnich believed that Kurland had failed in his responsibilities as president, by not reining in Sambol. Nevertheless, Krsnich told Mozilo that if the choice were between Kurland and Sambol he would unhesitatingly choose Kurland.

In early September, 2006, the company announced that Sambol would replace Kurland as president and chief operating officer, that Mozilo would stay on as chairman and C.E.O. until 2009, and that Kurland would depart. Kurland left the company, where he had worked for twenty-seven years, without even sending an e-mail message to employees. (Last year, along with several other former Countrywide executives, he started a new company, PennyMac, which buys and sells distressed mortgages; many people were outraged that someone who had helped create the mortgage debacle was now scavenging its remains.)

Mozilo had to negotiate a new contract, and focussed on obtaining his due. According to a report by the House oversight committee, when a compensation expert criticized aspects of Mozilo's existing contract, Mozilo saw to it that the company retained another expert. In 2005, Mozilo's total compensation was valued at more than a hundred and forty million dollars, making him one of the highest-paid executives surveyed by the Corporate Library, a research firm co-founded by the shareholder activist Nell Minow. At a shareholders' meeting in June, 2006, a participant objected to the bonuses, perks, and options that Countrywide provided Mozilo and other senior executives. Mozilo responded that such complaints were "obscene, ridiculous, and absurd."

According to the company insider, during Countrywide's first years in business, Mozilo had sold shares to help fund the company and was left owning a stake of about one per cent. "A majority of the company founders he rubbed shoulders with owned ten per cent or twenty per cent, and were worth billions of dollars," the company insider said. "Angelo always felt he did not have enough ownership in the company he founded and built. So he was very, very adamant about what his compensation should be." In his contract negotiations in the fall of 2006, Mozilo fought to retain both his compensation and his perks, but he ultimately made some concessions. As he explained to a consultant, "At this stage in my life at Countrywide, this process is no longer about money but more about respect and acknowledgment of my accomplishments. . . . Boards have been placed under enormous pressure by the left-wing anti-business press and the envious leaders of unions and other so-called 'C.E.O. Comp Watchers.'"

By early 2007, subprime defaults were rising rapidly. Mozilo often emphasized that subprime mortgages composed only a small per cent of Countrywide's business, but his company was still one of the biggest subprime lenders in the country. He appeared confident, however, that Countrywide would emerge stronger from this crisis, as it had from every other, while weaker lenders fell away. Meanwhile, he decided that it was important for Countrywide to increase its efforts to diversify; he was interested in building up other divisions, such as capital markets. He approached Jimmy Dunne III, the C.E.O. of a small Wall Street investment bank, Sandler O'Neill & Partners.

The two firms were an odd match. Dunne was widely known to be risk-averse. After suffering devastating losses in its offices in the World Trade Center on September 11th, Dunne rebuilt the company, and, by December, 2001, it was profitable again. It never posted the huge gains that most publicly owned Wall Street firms had during the boom years, but some of those firms have disappeared while the privately held Sandler O'Neill remains sound. "People confused leverage with performance," Dunne told me. "Here, our attitudes are more like the French Foreign Legion—prepare for the worst, hope for the best."

Dunne reviewed Countrywide's financial records, and decided that he was uncomfortable with the company's business model and its approach to risk. In February, 2007, he met with Mozilo, Sambol, and Ranjit Kripalani, Countrywide's head of capital markets. "These guys were true believers," Dunne said. "I was afraid of that. Where was the doubting Thomas?" He felt that Mozilo was the most conservative of the executives he met with, and he told Sambol that he would proceed with the deal on the condition that he report to Mozilo. Sambol rejected the idea, and Dunne ended the discussions.

What made Dunne and his team uncomfortable was the volume and the quality of the loans on Countrywide's balance sheet. Kurland, schooled by Loeb, had believed that Countrywide should make only as many loans as it could promptly sell, but Sambol argued that such a policy was antiquated. As other subprime lenders went out of business, Countrywide began picking up an increasing volume of loans, many of which made their way onto the company's balance sheet. As late as July, 2007, Countrywide was originating billions of dollars of loans that one analyst estimated would likely be salable only at a loss.

A month later, Wall Street buyers abandoned most mortgage-backed securities, and the collapse of the mortgage market predicted by Krsnich finally occurred. Mozilo flew to New York to plead with the heads of J. P. Morgan Chase, Bank of New York, and other Countrywide creditors to continue to fund the short-term debt, known as commercial paper, which the company counted on to finance many of its loans; they refused. Countrywide borrowed $11.5 billion under preëstablished lines of credit from forty banks, and on August 22nd Bank of America acquired a two-billion-dollar stake in Countrywide.

By December, Countrywide's board was contemplating the sale of the company and had retained Jimmy Dunne to advise it. "I remember being in Angelo's office," Dunne said. "He told me, 'Everyone looks at history to interpret the present and predict the future. This is unlike anything I even thought three months ago.'" Dunne added, "He felt the crisis was deeper, earlier, than the management team did."

Eric Sieracki, the chief financial officer, walked directors through the conditions of a "base scenario," a "stress scenario," and a "severe scenario"—as if it were not evident that the Countrywide scenario was already severe. Bank of America was the sole prospective buyer, and it was offering to pay roughly four billion dollars to acquire more than a thousand Countrywide offices and a loan portfolio of about $1.5 trillion. Sieracki bridled at the price, and pointed out that Golden West—a big California thrift that had been sold in May, 2006, near the top of the market—had brought almost twenty-six billion dollars. But Mozilo was determined to close the deal.

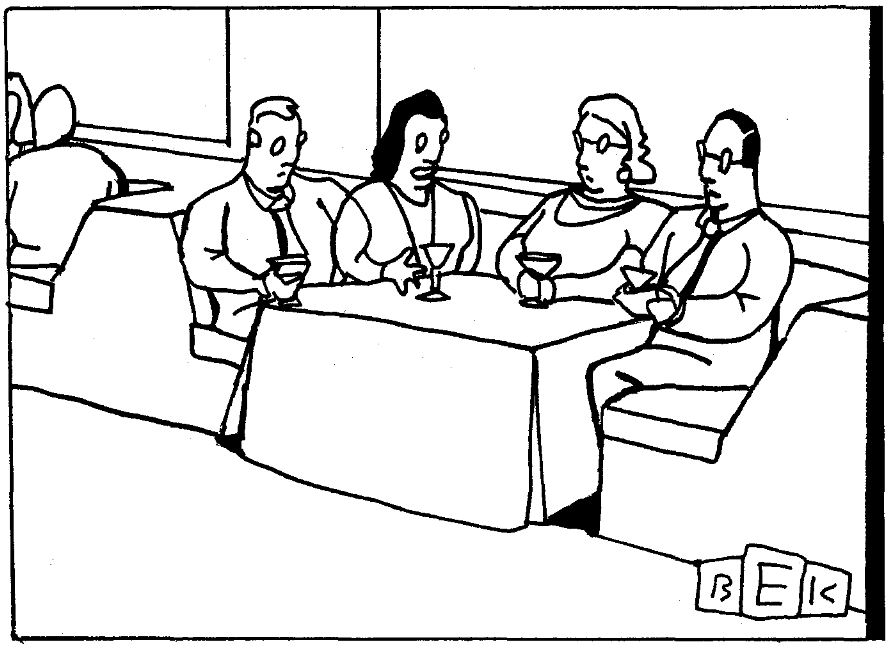
On January 11, 2008, Bank of America announced it would buy Countrywide for four billion dollars in stock—a sixth the amount of its market value before the crisis began. And in mid-2008, when Bank of America acquired Countrywide, both Sambol and Mozilo left the company.

A year earlier, in July, 2007, when it had become plain that problems in the mortgage market were widespread—affecting prime as well as subprime loans—an analyst asked Mozilo, in a conference call, whether with hindsight he would have done things differently, starting in 2005 or 2006. Mozilo responded that he would have, theoretically; but, he added, "Our volumes, our whole place in the industry, would have changed dramatically, because we would have arbitrarily made a decision that was contrary to what everything appeared to be. . . . It would have been an insight that only, I think, a superior spirit could have had at the time." However, he continued, "I ask myself that all the time as C.E.O. . . . What should I have known and when should I have known it, and what should I have done about it?"

The next month, the market collapsed, and the real damage began to unfold. Since then, Mozilo has had plenty of time for introspection. Unsurprisingly, he takes issue with the notion that all roads in the worldwide financial implosion lead to his doorstep. It is true that the crisis was greater than the collapse of the subprime-mortgage market. As the economics professor Nouriel Roubini wrote earlier this year, in *Foreign Policy*, "The credit excesses that created this disaster were global. There were many bubbles, and they extended beyond housing in many countries to commercial real estate mortgages and loans, to credit cards, auto loans, and student loans. There were bubbles for the securitized products that converted these loans and mortgages into complex, toxic, and destructive financial instruments. And there were still more bubbles for local government borrowing, leveraged buyouts, hedge funds, commercial and industrial loans, corporate bonds, commodities, and credit default swaps. . . . Taken together, these amounted to the biggest asset and credit bubble in human history."

Nonetheless, probably because problems with home mortgages have affected so many people, Countrywide and its C.E.O. have become fixed in the public mind. And Mozilo's flashiness and reactive personality make him easy to caricature. In May, 2008, when he was still chairman of Countrywide, pending the Bank of America acquisition, he received an e-mail from a borrower, Daniel Bailey, Jr., who was pleading for help in modifying his adjustable-rate mortgage; much of Bailey's language was from a Web site, Loansafe.org, which coaches borrowers in trouble. Mozilo meant to forward his response to another Countrywide executive but hit "Reply" instead. "This is unbelievable," he wrote. "Most of these letters now have the same wording. Obviously they are being counseled by some other person or by the internet. Disgusting." Bailey posted Mozilo's response on Loansafe, and it ignited an online firestorm. "Angelo was a serial e-mailer, day and night," the company insider noted. "He e-mailed like he spoke—bluntly."

Mozilo's e-mails are the centerpiece of the S.E.C. complaint. If the case goes to trial, he will have to explain why his e-mails to other company executives were at such variance with his



“We don’t go to therapists—we just watch them on TV.”

public statements about the quality of Countrywide’s loans. According to the complaint, Mozilo praised pay-option loans on May 31, 2006, at a business conference, calling them “a sound investment for our Bank and a sound financial management tool for consumers.” The next day, he e-mailed Sambol to express his concerns that borrowers were misstating their income, and that a greater number of defaults were likely.

Several former Countrywide executives have told me that Mozilo had turned over the day-to-day workings of the company to others; he was Countrywide’s ambassador, appearing at financial conferences and on CNBC. A number of e-mails indicate that he was disconcerted by the way the company was operating. In the first quarter of 2006, H.S.B.C., which had purchased Countrywide’s 80/20, or hundred-percent-subprime, loans, alleged that some were defective, and forced Countrywide to buy them back. This got Mozilo’s attention. On March 28, 2006, in an e-mail to Sambol and others, he instructed them to implement a series of corrective measures, saying that the 80/20 loan is “the most dangerous product in existence and there can be nothing more toxic and therefore requires that no deviation from guidelines be permitted.” On April 13th, Mozilo, in an e-mail to Sambol, Sieracki, and others, still addressing the H.S.B.C. situation, wrote that the loans had been originated “through our channels with disregard for process [and] compliance with guidelines.” He went on, “In my conversations with Sambol he calls the 100% sub prime seconds as the ‘milk’ of the business. Frankly, I consider that product line to be the poison of ours.” Mozilo seemed prepared to curb Sambol’s aggressiveness and impose stricter guidelines. Nonetheless, it was at about this time that he seems to have decided that he wanted Sambol, not Kurland, to succeed him. And, in January, 2007, in an e-mail cited in the S.E.C. complaint, McMurray, the chief risk officer, wrote to Sieracki that Countrywide’s credit guidelines were “wider than they have ever been.”

Charges of insider trading may be the most difficult legal issue that Mozilo faces. As he prepared for retirement, he arranged to sell stock through what is known as a 10b5-1 plan, under which corporate executives must set the dates of their trades in advance, to protect against allegations of insider trading. Starting in late 2006, Mozilo made several changes to his stock-trading plans, to increase the number of shares he could sell. According to the S.E.C. complaint, Mozilo exercised more than five million stock options and made nearly a hundred and forty million dollars from his sales. Last December, Mariana Pfaelzer, the U.S. District Court judge who is presiding over many securities actions related to Countrywide, wrote that Mozilo “amended these plans so frequently during this period that he ‘appear[ed] to defeat the very purpose of the 10b5-1 plans.’” His later sales coincided with the rise in subprime defaults. Mozilo’s lawyer contends that the stock sales were entirely lawful and that the S.E.C.’s allegations are baseless. Sambol’s lawyer and Mozilo’s lawyer both say that the S.E.C.’s allegation that Countrywide executives knew about undisclosed risk is false, and also assert that the S.E.C.’s complaint selectively quotes e-mails taken out of context.

Mozilo always saw himself as providing mortgages to many who were like him—disenfranchised. (“So they’re not upper-middle-class white people—so what?” he would say. “They’re Hispanics, and maybe their money is not in a bank—but they are responsible.”) Several years ago, at the Midwinter Housing Conference, in Park City, Utah, after hearing some mortgage bankers saying that minorities didn’t deserve loans, he declared in a speech, “Homeownership is not a privilege but a right!” Now he abhors the idea that the retrograde view has gained credence. As the Fox Business Network anchor Neil Cavuto said last September, “Loaning to minorities and risky folks is a disaster.” Of course, the more people Mozilo got into homes, the more Countrywide’s market share grew. In the past five years, millions of people who received mortgages from Countrywide, many of them the minority homeowners he had set out to assist, were hurt, not helped, by him. Last October, Bank of America promised more than eight billion dollars in loan modifications and other aid for Countrywide borrowers, to resolve predatory-lending investigations by eleven states—the largest such agreement in U.S. history. For Mozilo, who so fervently believed in lowering the barrier to homeownership, and had referred to predatory lenders as “sharks,” it must seem the worst possible epitaph. ♦

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THE MUSIC MOUNTAIN

The classical world's most coveted retreat.

BY ALEX ROSS

Mitsuko Uchida, one of the world's leading classical pianists, could comfortably pass her summers flying from one festival to another, staying in luxury hotels and private villas. Instead, she stays on the campus of Marlboro College, a small liberal-arts institution in southern Vermont. Since 1951, the college has hosted Marlboro Music, an outwardly low-key summer gathering that functions variously as a chamber-music festival, a sort of finishing school for gifted young performers, and a clandestine summit for the musical intelligentsia. Uchida and the pianist Richard Goode serve as Marlboro's co-directors, alternating the lead role from year to year; last summer, when I visited three times, Uchida was in residence from late June until early August. She plays a variety of roles in the Marlboro world—high priest, den mother, provocateur, jester, and arbiter of style.

Marlboro, whose fifty-ninth session gets under way next week, is a singular phenomenon. The great Austrian-born pianist Rudolf Serkin, Marlboro's co-founder and longtime leader, once declared that he wished to "create a community, almost utopian," where artists could forget about commerce and escape into a purely musical realm. Marlboro has been compared to a kibbutz, a hippie commune, Shangri-La, a cult (but "a good cult"), Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, and George Orwell's Animal Farm, where "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." On certain lazy days, it becomes a highbrow summer camp, where brainy musicians go swimming in the local pond.

At Marlboro, Uchida follows a set routine. Between nine-thirty and ten in the morning, she arrives at the campus coffee shop, where breakfast is served to those who have missed the morning buffet in the dining hall. Young musicians slouch on blue and purple couches around the room, and she stops to chat with them. Aside from her Peggy Guggenheim sunglasses—a bright-blue model with pointy edges, patterned after a Venetian Carnival mask—she dresses simply, often wearing sweatpants and a sweatshirt emblazoned with the name Marlboro. One day last summer, "House of the Rising Sun" was playing on the coffee-shop stereo; this gave way to a Scott Joplin rag. Uchida shimmied to the music as she approached the counter to place her order. Her favorite dish is the Egg McMarlboro, a sandwich made with a fried egg, local tomato, Vermont Cheddar, and bacon. Most patrons are served on paper plates, but Uchida's dish was carried out on a wooden tray, with a cappuccino in a china cup.

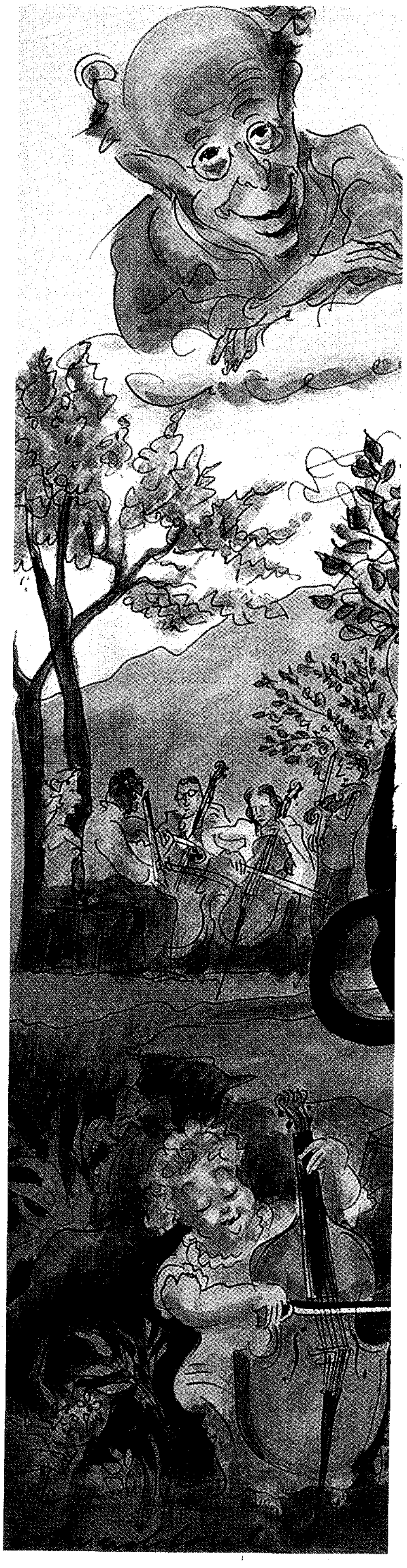
Matan Porat, an Israeli-born composer and pianist with an impressively tangled, Beethoven-like mane, sat down across from Uchida and noticed the cappuccino. "Nice!" he said. "I didn't know they were doing it."

"Actually, they are not," she said. "But they do it for me. I must allow myself a few small luxuries." She smiled sweetly and took a sip.

The oboist James Austin Smith, a recent graduate of the Yale School of Music, flopped down on the adjacent couch, propping sandalled feet on the table. Oboists, with their limited chamber repertory, have less reason to be intimidated by the pianist than others who may dream of performing with her; in any case, Smith and Uchida had struck up a playful rapport. Smith announced that he was adding some ornaments, or unwritten musical elaborations, to his part in a Haydn symphony that the musicians were presenting informally that night.

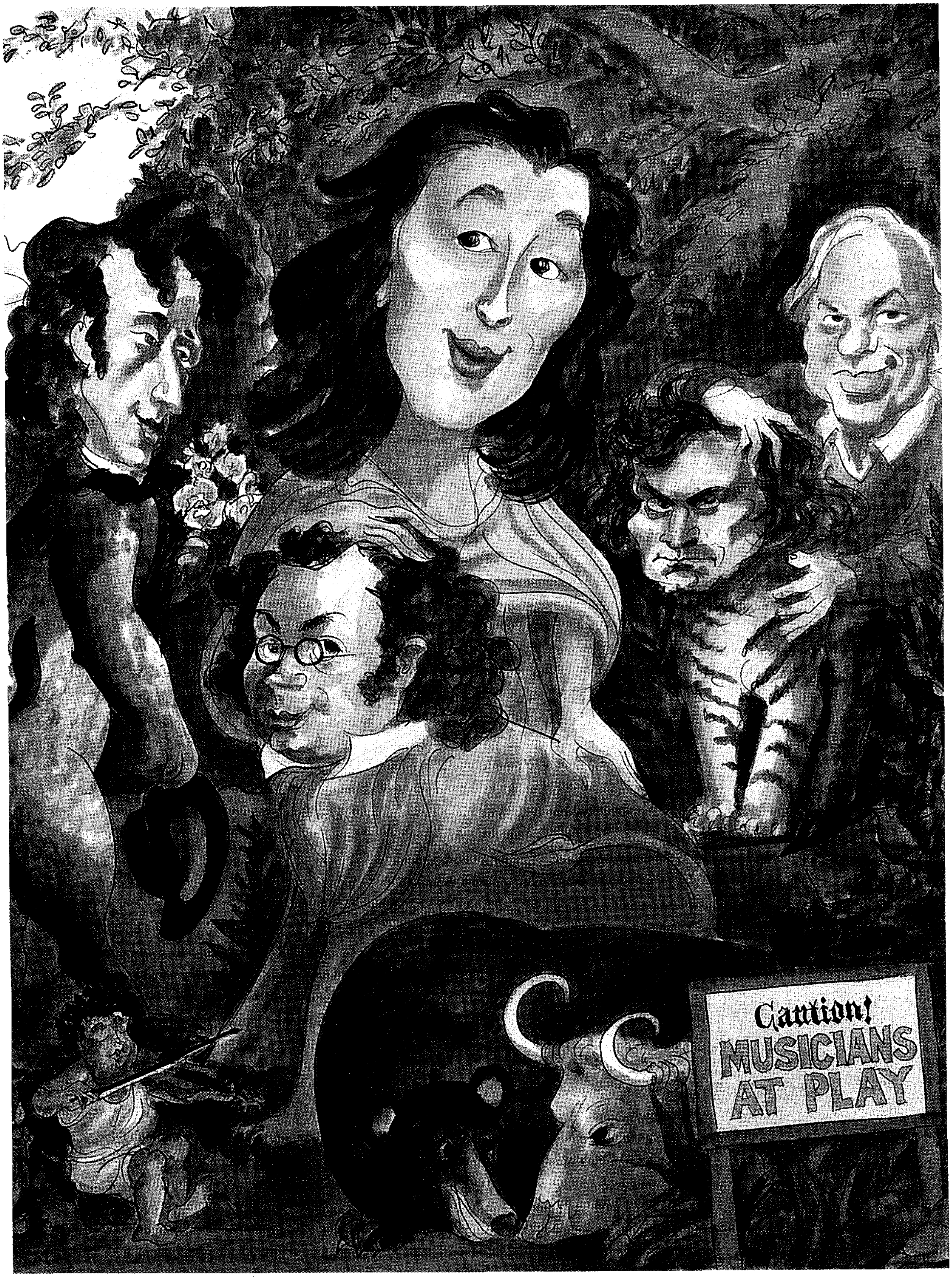
"Cheeky James!" Uchida exclaimed, in mock horror. "No illegal ornaments! I forbid it!"

Uchida speaks a language that can only be described as Uchida. In 1961, when she was twelve, her father, a Japanese diplomat, was appointed Ambassador to Austria, and she spent her adoles-



At Marlboro, Mitsuko Uchida and Richard Goo

EDWARD SOREL


Caution!
MUSICIANS AT PLAY

eserve the legacy of Rudolf Serkin, who wished to create a "community, almost utopian," devoted to the chamber-music repertory.

cence in Vienna, becoming fluent in German. In her early twenties, she moved to London, which remains her home, and she acquired a kind of Japanese-Austrian-British accent. (Queen Elizabeth II recently named her Dame Mitsuko.) Her many summers at Marlboro have allowed her to take on a sizable American vocabulary, which she is always seeking to expand. "What is 'ditzy'?" she asked at one point. "Not so bright? Talkative but not so bright? O.K.! Gotcha!" Her speech falls into a pattern of stagily soaring phrases followed by rat-a-tat bursts. At breakfast, she holds everyone transfixed with a barrage of stories, epigrams, and snap judgments. On a rising instrumentalist: "For the Germans, the greatest thing since Karajan. Karajan, of course, was the greatest thing since Hitler." On a veteran singer: "She has nothing in her brain, but she is a fantastic coach." On a celebrated conductor: "Obviously, he has charisma. But I don't want charisma. I want something other than charisma." On prodigies: "Do you want yourself to be operated on by a genius twenty-year-old heart surgeon? Do you want to go to the theatre and see a teen-ager play King Lear?" Such comments are often punctuated by a wildly oscillating laugh that sounds like a flock of songbirds ready to be transcribed by Olivier Messiaen. When she is preparing to throw one of her verbal darts, she narrows her eyes and purses her lips. When she has words of praise, she opens her eyes wide, raises one hand to her heart, and draws in her breath sharply.

It was the last week of June. The Marlboro population—thirteen pianists, forty-three string players, sixteen wind and brass players, and nine singers, along with a staff of administrators, coaches, schedulers, librarians, recording engineers, piano technicians, receptionists, interns, cooks, babysitters, and a lifeguard—had been in residence for a week. They had settled into dorm rooms, apartments, and cabins. Some were surprised to find themselves reverting to a collegiate life style, sharing a bathroom and hanging out late at night. But all of them knew that a successful term at Marlboro can practically assure one's career. More than a hundred alumni hold jobs in eight leading American orchestras, twenty-two in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra alone. The most venerable of American string quartets, the Guarneri, which retires later this year, formed at Marlboro in 1964. The Emerson, Juilliard, Orion, and St. Lawrence Quartets also have Marlboro connections, and Murray Perahia, Joshua Bell, and Hilary Hahn received early guidance there. Peter Serkin, Rudolf's son, made his début at Marlboro in 1958, at the age of eleven, and went on to have a major career.

Uchida keeps returning because she cherishes the chance to immerse herself in music in a way that no other institution allows. "I was here when I was very young, in 1974," she told me. "I had a wonderful time, but I didn't quite understand. When I came back, in 1992"— Serkin had died the previous year, and Uchida became an unofficial adviser, with an official appointment following in 1999—"then I understood. I got hooked. In Marlboro, you get a different way of not only looking at the world but also of looking at life. If you spend weeks together, day in and day out, eating the meals together, chatting and sitting around and drinking the beer together and God knows what, you begin to get a basic outline of what it really means to be a musician, as opposed to flying from one city to the next and rehearsing the 'Archduke' Trio for half an hour and then already walking onstage. Ultimately, Marlboro is about the concept of time. We have time to rehearse, time simply to think. But never quite enough time. Time slows down and time accelerates."

After breakfast, Uchida practices in her apartment for several hours, going through her repertory for the coming season. Those spells of exploration have become vital to her evolution. When she first made her name, in the nineteen-eighties, as a Mozart specialist, she was noted chiefly for her fluid phrasing and her lustrous tone. Over the years, her repertory has broadened—at a Carnegie Hall recital last year, she combined pieces by Bach with the elegantly cryptic works of the contemporary Hungarian composer György Kurtág—and her performances have taken on philosophical depth. In late sonatas of Beethoven and Schubert, she summons a fractured, even violent emotional landscape without committing anything like an excessive gesture. Mozart remains her home ground. On the same night that James Smith inserted his cheeky ornaments into Haydn's Symphony No. 96, Uchida joined a small Marlboro

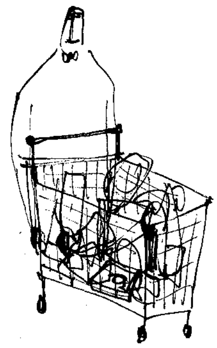
"I know a guy who does amazing things with water."

orchestra to read through Mozart's Piano Concerto in A, K. 414. The instrumental playing, with a few inexact entries, wasn't quite perfect, but it had other advantages: the music-making was mellow, naturally flowing, affectionately human. Only a few dozen people heard the performance, and in its intimacy it probably came closer to Mozart's own concerts than what we normally experience in a modern hall.

For decades, a sign has stood beside the road through the Marlboro campus: "Caution: Musicians at Play." Performers are liberated from tight schedules; managers, agents, and publicity people do not watch from the wings. Works of Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms melt into a landscape that resembles the pastoral settings from which those composers drew inspiration; when Uchida and a group of players rehearse a Dvořák quintet in a hut on a hillside, it mixes with fugues of birdsong and the ostinato of insects. Wireless Internet aside, participants are effectively isolated in a premodern existence where one walks around all day and eats meals at long tables in a community that includes both toddlers and octogenarians. Above all, as Uchida says, Marlboro achieves a stretching out and slowing down of time. One musician after another says the same thing: from September to May, when they sit down to play in an antiseptic postwar performing-arts center after an hour or two of rehearsal, they close their eyes and think of Marlboro.

Rudolf Serkin—or Mr. Serkin, as Marlboro people still call him—haunts the campus where he spent the last forty summers of his life. Marlboro's split personality, its refusal to decide between Teutonic solemnity and all-American anarchy, reflects Serkin's character. A musician of manic dedication, he practiced scales for hours on end and, in ensemble rehearsals, agonized over details until his collaborators were ready to crawl out of their skins. At other times, he behaved like a madcap schoolboy. He was famous for staging pranks; Arnold Steinhardt, the first violinist of the Guarneri Quartet, remembers the time a cherry bomb exploded under the hood of his car.

The violinist and violist Philipp Naegele came to Marlboro during the first summer and has returned some fifty times since. "What do I remember about Serkin?" he says. "Oh, the immense vitality. He had a real farm on a dirt road, with a peach orchard, horses, chickens, whatever one has. And he would go back and forth between the mud and the cows and the children and dogs and Beethoven. His vitality was inseparable from his physical groundedness. He was a great hiker, always going up in the mountains. Like Gustav Mahler. He looked a bit like Mahler, too. He had hands twice as wide and twice as heavy as anybody else's hands, and he could play softer than anybody else, because he didn't have to push. He ran a house that was absolutely impeccable, in terms of the décor, the art, the books, the food. But he had a sense of humor that was more than down to earth."



Serkin was born in 1903 in Bohemia, to a family of impoverished Eastern European Jews. As Stephen Lehmann and Marion Faber recount, in a biography of the pianist, Serkin first displayed talent when he heard one of his sisters at the piano. "It's all wrong," the boy said, bursting into tears. At the age of nine, he went to study in Vienna, where he fell under the influence of Eugenie Schwarzwald, a pedagogue and social activist. Through Schwarzwald, Serkin encountered Adolf Loos, Oskar Kokoschka, Karl Popper, and Arnold Schoenberg, with whom he studied composition. Schwarzwald's summertime gatherings of luminaries in mountain retreats influenced Marlboro, as did Schoenberg's Society for Private Musical Performances, which tried to break free of commercial concert culture.

The dominant force in Serkin's life was the German violinist Adolf Busch, a brilliant player who detested virtuoso showmanship and devoted himself in almost monkish fashion to the heights of the German chamber and solo repertory. Serkin met Busch in 1920, when he was still in his teens, and adopted the violinist's belief system. "It's the philosophy of *Werktreue*, of being absolutely faithful to the score," Richard Goode, who came to Marlboro when he was fifteen, says. "People may discuss the limitations of that approach today, but back then their idealism was so important." (Goode carries on the tradition in sovereign performances of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, and Chopin, his self-effacing tastefulness causing him to be perennially underrated.) Serkin joined Busch's household and, in 1935, married the violinist's daughter Irene. The two men appeared as a duo across Europe, setting standards for chamber-music performance. Busch also led the Busch Quartet, whose sinewy recordings of Beethoven and Schubert mesmerized the young Mitsuko Uchida.

When Hitler came to power, Serkin's German career ended swiftly, and Busch, who was not Jewish, responded by cancelling all his German engagements. He paid a price for this rare act of solidarity: when he tried to establish himself in the United States, where he moved in 1939, he made little headway, his slightly astringent tone failing to please audiences accustomed to the sweet tones of Heifetz and Kreisler. In 1940, Busch suffered a heart attack, which further limited his public career. He moved to the small Vermont town of Guilford, with his daughter and son-in-law living in the house next door. The surroundings reminded the émigrés of Switzerland and the Vienna Woods.

The idea arose that Busch and his brother, the cellist Herman, should join several other refugees—the French flutist Marcel Moyse; Moyse's son Louis; and Louis's wife, the violinist Blanche Honegger Moyse—in running a summer music school at Marlboro College, which had started up in 1946, on the site of a nearby dairy farm. At first, Serkin had no intention of being closely involved. Busch provided Marlboro's core philosophy: the notion of master musicians guiding neophytes, the emphasis on rehearsal and conversation over performance and publicity. (Busch complained that New York musicians were obsessed with "covering everything and just getting the notes right. . . . A love of music was rarely present.") After Busch's death, in 1952, Serkin took over, and remained Marlboro's director until his death.

In the early years, chaos reigned on the business end, with Serkin donating much of his concert income to keep the operation afloat. (Anointed by Toscanini, Serkin fared much better in America than Busch did.) Naegele remembers that some prospective students walked into the dining hall—formerly a cow barn—

and then walked out, unable to believe that a ragtag group of beer-drinking, pipe-smoking foreigners had anything to offer. But young musicians soon understood what they had to gain by attending, and by the nineteen-sixties Marlboro was renowned. The Columbia label issued best-selling recordings in the Music from Marlboro series. The cellist Pablo Casals began visiting in 1960, his fame attracting international press. After a certain point, Serkin, innately suspicious of publicity, started to shun inquiries from the outside world. This wary attitude persists. Marlboro-ites ruefully tell of a celebrated young pianist who, a few years back, dropped by for a week or two and said, "You know, this place could be really famous!" It would rather not.

FIVE HOUSES DOWN

I loved his ten demented chickens
and the hell-eyed dog, the mailbox
shaped like a huge green gun.
I loved the eyesore opulence
of his five partial cars, the wonder-cluttered porch
with its oilspill plumage, tools
cauled in oil, the dark
clockwork of disassembled engines
christened Sweet Baby and benedicted Old Bitch;
and down the steps into the yard the explosion
of mismatched parts and black scraps
amid which, like a bad sapper cloaked
in luck, he would look up stunned,
patting the gut that slopped out of his undershirt
and saying, *Son,*
you lookin' to make some scratch?
All afternoon we'd pile the flatbed high
with stacks of Exxon floormats
mysteriously stencilled with his name,
rain-rotted sheetrock or miles
of misfitted pipes, coil after coil
of rusted fencewire that stained for days
every crease of me, rollicking it all
to the dump where, while he called
every ragman and ravened junkdog by name,
he catpicked the avalanche of trash
and fished some always fixable thing

Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax are two of the hundreds of musicians who have made the pilgrimage. On August 3, 1973, they played their first concert together, in a Marlboro performance of Brahms's Piano Quartet in C Minor. They recalled their experiences recently over coffee at Café Ronda, near Lincoln Center.

"We had met at the Juilliard cafeteria," Ax said. "We ended up being roommates at Marlboro, although you were never in the room. You were always with Jill."

"I met Jill, my wife, at Marlboro," Ma explained.

"Do you remember the dress rehearsal of the Brahms, when Mr. Serkin came? He had this thing—whatever was printed in the music, that's how you play. If, say, the upper register has a note that is very difficult, and it would be easier to play that one note with your left hand, you *don't* do it." Ax mentioned Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, which begins with a rapid leap in the left hand. The easy way out is to split the leap between the hands. "Somebody did that in an audition. That was it."

"*Zank you very much!*" Ma said, in the Serkin accent. "*Zank you very much for findink ze time!*"

"That guy could have played like Horowitz, and he would not have gotten in," Ax went on. "So, in the Brahms, there is a horrible spot in the last movement, where I couldn't stretch my hand wide enough to play this one chord. So I rolled it. '*Ach!*' Serkin said. 'There is no arpeggiando on that chord.' 'I know, Mr. Serkin, but my hand isn't big enough.' And he said, 'Don't worry! In the concert, it will grow a little bit.' "

"He said your hand will grow?" Ma asked.

"A little bit, yes. What happened was, I played the chord, and I also played every note in between. And that was O.K. He was happy with that."

Whereas Ax idolized Serkin—that summer, he spoke only briefly with the great man, unable to find the courage to have an extended conversation—Ma stood in awe of Pablo Casals, who had performed for Queen Victoria in his youth and remained active into his nineties.

"I played for Casals in a class," Ma said. "He kept saying, 'I can't hear you! I can't hear you!' That was the feedback. But it was great, especially when he conducted the orchestra in—I think it was Beethoven's Fourth. Because here's this guy who had to use an oxygen thing backstage, who needed two people to walk him out. You think he is about to see death. And then the music starts." Ma impersonated an ancient, shrunken man coming to life, growing in stature, raising his arms high in the air and roaring vague commands: "*Nooooo!* . . . *Beethoven!* . . . *M-u-u-usic!* . . . *Crescendo!*" Ma went on, "I wasn't so sure that I wanted to have a musical career at that time. I wasn't sure that music was all it was cracked up to be. But to see a guy like that, way past retirement age, getting it up for Beethoven's Fourth—where does this energy come from? And I realized there was something very potent at work."

Each senior figure had a distinctive approach. Moyse, the master of the French school of flute playing, had his students read through opera arias so that they learned to imitate the human voice. The Polish-born pianist Mieczyslaw Horszowski said little, sometimes merely pointing and smiling at a passage in a score. Felix Galimir, a supremely cultivated Viennese violinist who had been Toscanini's concertmaster in the NBC Symphony, coached players in the psychology of chamber music, where, as Ax says, "no one leads and no one follows."

up from the depths. Something
about his endless aimless work
was not work, my father said.
Somehow his barklike earthquake curses
were not curses, for he could *goddam*
a slipped wrench and *shitfuck* a stuck latch,
but one bad word from me
made his whole being
twang like a nail mis-struck. *Aint no call for that,*
son, no call at all. Slipknot, whatknot, knot
from which no man escapes—
prestoed back to plain old rope;
whipsnake, blacksnake, deep in the wormdirt
worms like the clutch of mud:
I wanted to live forever
five houses down
in the womanless rooms a woman
sometimes seemed to move through, leaving him
twisting a hand-stitched dishtowel
or idly wiping the volcanic dust.
It seemed like heaven to me:
beans and weenies from paper plates,
black-fingered tinkerings on the back stoop
as the sun set, on an upturned fruitcrate
a little jamjar of rye like ancient light,
from which, once, I took a single, secret sip,
my eyes tearing and my throat on fire.

—*Christian Wiman*

Alexander Schneider, of the Budapest Quartet, was a Russian-accented volcano, exhorting and berating his charges. And Isidore Cohen, the longtime violinist of the Beaux Arts Trio, encouraged independence. Ma said, "He'd look at you, smoking a cigarette, and say, 'What do you think? Should there be a decrescendo?' He'd force you to make choices."

"Maybe there were some at Marlboro who used the idea of chamber music like a club—a club to beat people with," Ax added. He assumed the tone of an unctuously disapproving elder: " 'I know he plays the instrument well, but he doesn't know about *cha-a-a-a-mber* music.' But in the end there was no orthodoxy."

"There couldn't be," Ma said. "Because you were seeing all these different characters with their different approaches being passionate in different ways."

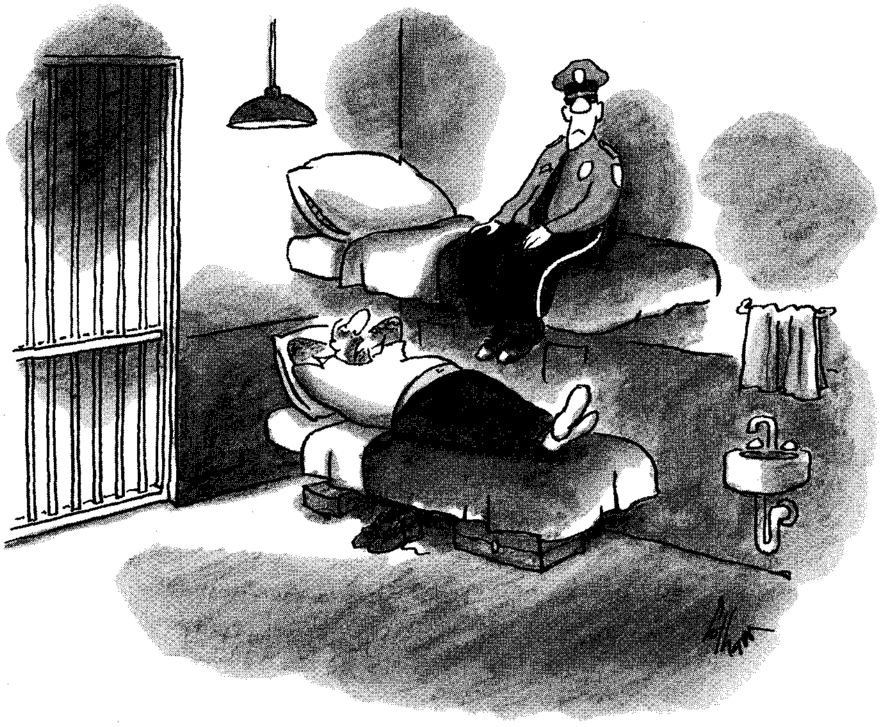
Uchida and Goode admire what Busch and Serkin created and have no wish to alter the formula. But they have put their imprint on the institution. "When I first came back, in '92, every second word was 'Rudi never did that,' 'Mr. Serkin never did that,' " Uchida told me. "Nobody says things like that anymore. Richard and I really work very hard on that. The place is more open—yeah, sure. I always keep my antennae going. I watch out for the ones who need more care. The ones who are very gifted but not, you know, whiz kids. That's why I go to the coffee shop all the time. I sniff around. I always know who is going out with whom—Richard has no idea! And, look, Richard and I, we are both oddballs. But we have careers. And that is what I say to the kids—if *I* can have a career, anyone can have a career."

In the old days, with various male egos competing for the upper hand, there was something almost macho about Marlboro. Uchida, both as a personality and as a performer, projects authority without demanding it. Last summer, the mezzo-soprano Rebecca Ringle recalled what Uchida said after rehearsing the Mozart A-Major Concerto: "She said of one passage, 'It's happy but it's powerful. It's the way women can be now—happy, good, beautiful, powerful.' And I almost cried when I heard that, because that's what she is. She's so elfin but really powerful and definitely feminine and totally intelligent."

The Uchida summers and the Goode summers have distinct identities. Goode tends to bring about a looser, more libertine atmosphere. "He's such an incredibly sweet man, off in his own world," one musician said to me. "He thinks of music instead of himself. He's so funny in rehearsal. Sometimes he'll say, 'Let's do that again,' not because the passage needs work but simply because he loves it and wants to hear it one more time. Mitsuko is more intense. She is always watching, always listening. When she says, 'Ben Beilman is *quite good*,' everyone notices." (Beilman is an eerily mature nineteen-year-old violinist who studies at the Curtis Institute, in Philadelphia.) "Together, the two of them are the perfect substitute parents."

Most young musicians who are accepted at Marlboro spend two or three consecutive summers there. Over the winter, hundreds audition for the small number of spots that open up annually. When I asked Goode to define what qualities he and Uchida were seeking, he said, "A certain technical excellence is a prerequisite. But you also listen for urgency, emotional reality. Maybe that is the primary thing in the end. I guess you could call it 'musicality.' You can often hear it right away. There's a story that when Murray Perahia auditioned for Marlboro he played the C-Minor Impromptu of Schubert, which begins with fortissimo Gs." Goode imitated the sound. "And after that Horszowski supposedly turned to Serkin and said, 'Let's take him.' " Uchida puts it in her pithy way: "As a rule, the imaginative ones are lacking the technique and the ones that have good technique haven't got a clue. But there are exceptions to the rule, and we try to snap them up."

Marlboro is designed so that the youth contingent receives guidance from several generations of older musicians: "seniors," veterans who have been coming to Marlboro for years, and "junior seniors," established younger players who serve as intermediaries between the generations. Anthony Checchia, Frank Salomon, and Philip Maneval serve as Marlboro's ad-



"They're going to make it tough for you around here when they find out you used to be a cop."

ministrators, binding the group together. They are keepers of Marlboro's traditions—for example, the rule that all members of the community should take turns waiting on tables in the dining hall. Salomon says, "One of the great things is to see somebody who's here for the first time, a nineteen- or twenty-one-year-old kid, looking up to see Mitsuko Uchida or Arnold Steinhardt, or someone else they've idolized for ten or fifteen years, asking, 'What would you like to drink?' "

Last summer, the repertory at Marlboro included two hundred and twenty-one works by seventy composers. In a given week, there may be more than two hundred rehearsals, in studios, classrooms, and common spaces around the campus, all activity coördinated on a color-coded schedule board. The Central European golden age predominates—Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Dvořák, Brahms—although a fair amount of contemporary music and offbeat fare figures in the mix. One or two composers are in residence each summer; last year, the German composer Jörg Widmann coached his "Hunt Quartet," in which players swish the air with their bows. For the first three weeks, Marlboro participants do nothing but rehearse; in July, they begin putting on weekend concerts for a paying public, in a six-hundred-and-thirty-seat hall. As rehearsals progress, senior members meet on Thursday evenings to devise a schedule for those groups which feel ready to perform. Although everyone insists that the rehearsals matter more than the performances, a competitive edge seeps in.

One muggy Saturday, I spent a day watching one rehearsal after another. The common room of the Happy Valley dormitory, a drab space with triangular eaves and a carpet purplish-gray in color, was a hub of activity. In the morning, three musicians in their late twenties and early thirties—the violinist Viviane Hagner, the cellist Priscilla Lee, and the pianist Jonathan Biss—were preparing Beethoven's Piano Trio Opus 1 No. 2. Biss, an exacting and poetic player who first came to Marlboro when he was sixteen, talked more than the others, although he couched his ideas in politely tentative fashion. "I was thinking of playing a slightly faster grace note. You hate it? Any feeling?"; "You can make a crescendo and I will blithely ignore you and go on my merry way." They worked on a repeating phrase, so that it initially had a sunny sound and later darkened. Lee drew a smiley face over the first instance. This led to a digression on the topic of messages that musicians write on their parts to remind themselves when they need to give a cue to other players ("ME!" or "Q") or when they need to fold out a hidden extra page ("Open the stupid page, motherfucker!" is an extreme example).

In the New Presser building, four wind players—the flutist Joshua Smith, the oboist Jaren Philleo, the clarinettist Romie de Guise-Langlois, and the bassoonist William Winstead—were wrestling with Elliott Carter's "Eight Études and a Fantasy," a ferociously difficult 1950 work in a more or less atonal idiom. Winstead and Smith hold lead positions with the Cincinnati and Cleveland Orchestras, while Guise-Langlois was recently a member of Juilliard and Carnegie Hall's élite Academy program and Philleo plays in the Louisiana Philharmonic. The mood in the room was tense; the musicians felt frustrated by the score, which, they thought, wasn't giving them quite enough information. Winstead puzzled over a stream of eighth notes that were divided into groups of five and seven. Inevitably, such phrases break down into subsidiary units of two and three, but the bassoonist couldn't decide where those breaks should fall.

"How about in the last half of 78 I play three plus two plus two," Winstead said. "No, wait—what if it were two plus two plus three?"

The players tried again but weren't convinced. They passed around a miniature score so they could see how the parts intermeshed. They started in once more, then broke down, amid exclamations of "Argh!" and "Shit!"

Winstead reflected on how the slow pace at Marlboro had made him look afresh at music that he thought he knew well. He spoke about playing the Carter on the concert circuit: "You're not asking 'What's it all about?' You're just trying to stay together and get through it. I've never delved into these kinds of details before."

Smith attempted to rally the others. "When in doubt, the theme is in the flute," he said.

Back at Happy Valley, Uchida had arrived for a pair of rehearsals, and was fussing with a recalcitrant dehumidifier. "You jiggle and whack and kick, and it works," she said. She is particular about the health of her instruments and has had a dehumidifier installed in every room with a piano. Her first rehearsal was of Schubert's Piano Trio in E-Flat. Joining her were Soovin Kim, a thirty-three-year-old violinist whose subtle expressivity suits Uchida's style, and David Soyer, an eighty-six-year-old legend of the chamber-music world, who played cello in the Guarneri Quartet for most of its existence. Soyer, who affects a perpetually put-upon demeanor, is famous for claiming insistently that pianists always play too loudly when they join chamber groups. He is also possessive of his music stand, which carries the notice "David Soyer's PERSONAL stand. HANDS OFF!"

The three musicians had reached the slow movement of the Schubert, which opens with one of the most famous inventions in chamber music: softly marching chords on the piano, a plaintive cello melody featuring a repeated trill. Soyer, grunting softly as he played, brought to bear a nobly restrained tone and rhythmically incisive phrasing. He lavished attention on a pair of trills that lead into the hushed coda, wistfully prolonging the second as it precipitated a shift from C major to C minor. Kim executed everything with unfailing precision—so much so that the older players actually encouraged him to be *less* precise at times. "A little more Wiener schmalz," Soyer suggested at one point, demonstrating a slide from note to note, like a carelessly dragging foot. "You can't play sloppy!" Uchida said, teasingly. Kim protested that he could indeed play sloppy, and tried again, laying on a modicum of schmalz. Uchida received only a single citation for being too loud. In accompanimental passages, she achieved the feat of almost disappearing, so that the piano became a nimbus of timbre floating around the string voices.

When Soyer and Kim left, the young soprano Charlotte Dobbs entered, ready to work with Uchida on Schoenberg's "The Book of the Hanging Gardens," a song cycle on poems by the German Symbolist Stefan George. Uchida had never played the songs and was making a close study not only of the music but also of George's poetry. Dobbs, a sunny-tempered woman with a rapid-fire manner of speech, held her own; a recent graduate of Yale, she majored in English and wrote her thesis on Shakespeare and Joyce. With Dobbs, Uchida was noticeably more free-spirited than with the two male players, indulging in giggles, literary digressions, and spells of self-criticism.

"Schoenberg's music is echt Viennese," Uchida said. "When you get to '*Schnäbel kräuseln*,' I hear a sort of Viennese nasal sound. No? And not '*klagend*' but '*kl-a-a-a-gend*.' " She prompted Dobbs to bring out the rhythms more strongly, to accent certain consonants, to clarify the diction in places. Uchida also emphasized the differences between German and other languages. "You are singing it almost as if it were French," the pianist said. "French is very quick and even. '*Le président de la République a annoncé aujourd'hui dah-dah-dah-dah-dah*.' Japanese is kind of similar." She sang a fragment of a Japanese folk song, with a slight grimace. "German is more flowing, up and down."

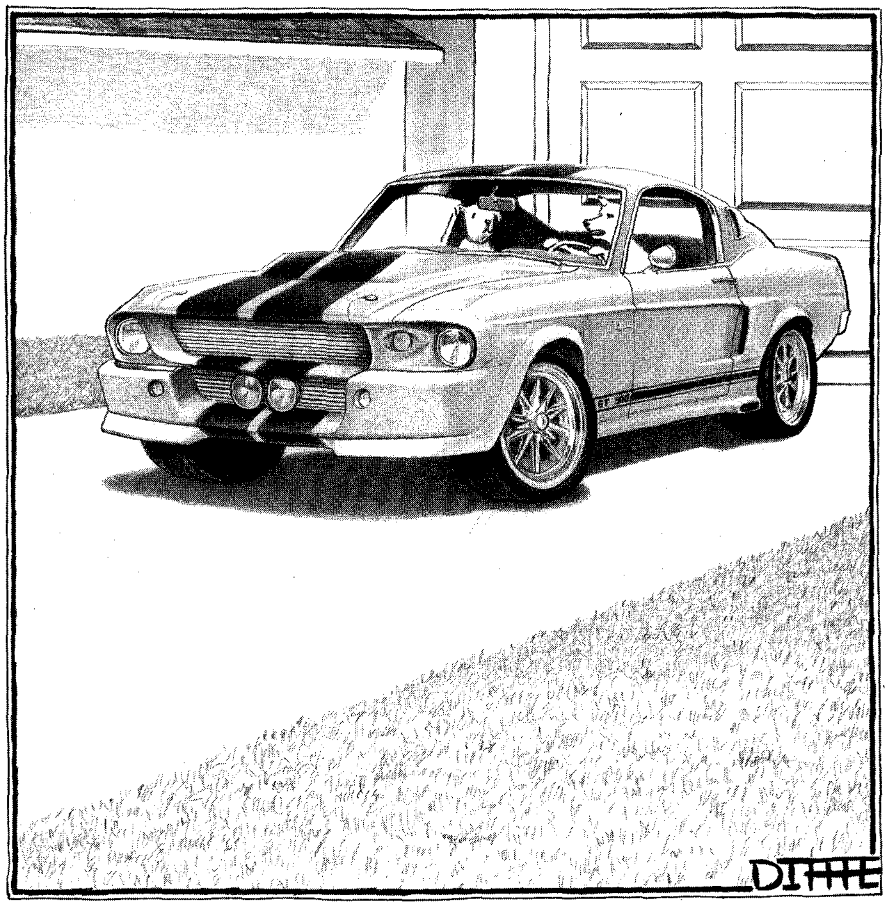
Dobbs ventured a few suggestions. "I think I can bring more excitement to the tone when I sing '*reichsten Lade*,' " she said. "Try to do something silky. Put more dazzle in the voice. Can we try a slightly more flowing tempo?"

"Yes, I am maybe too slow," Uchida replied.

The duo arrived at the climax of the cycle, a violently expressive song that, as Dobbs observed, communicates "every possible emotion you could feel in love with someone, except for satisfaction." Beneath the word *wahr*, or "true," there is a strangely shuddering whole-note chord consisting of a B-major triad with C-sharps attached; Schoenberg has marked it with a crescendo, which is technically an impossibility for a sustained chord, but with a coaxing of the pedal Uchida made it resonate through the bar.

By the end of the afternoon, sunshine had given way to a downpour. An S.U.V. was summoned to transport Uchida back to her apartment. Dobbs and I rode with her. "The pure major becomes *so nasty*," she said, of that weird B-major chord. "I love it. So dark, so beautiful. This is fun, yeah? But *bloody* hard."

Marlboro's most famous tradition is the paper-napkin-ball war that erupts most nights during dinner. History does not record whether Mr. Serkin originated the practice, but he was a lusty participant from the beginning. One night, when Queen Elisa-



"Now, whaddaya say we chase some cars."

beth of Belgium was passing through, the pianist Leon Fleisher had to raise an umbrella to shield her from bombardment. Uchida does not take part. "I am very good at *making*," she told me. "There is a technique. Pack in the corner, lightly, that is the idea. But I don't throw. If I start throwing, I will be *such* a target."

Other hoary Marlboro rituals include an annual square dance; the International Dinner, at which the musicians cook up dishes from various cultures and afterward present comedy skits (Uchida impersonations are frequent); and pranks in the Serkin manner. The tour-de-force prank of last summer took the form of an extended fantasia on the sign attached to David Soyer's music stand in Happy Valley. One morning, people awoke to find that hundreds of objects across the campus had been festooned with signs declaring them to be Soyer's property. "It was something unbelievable," Uchida told me. "Everything had a sign. 'David Soyer's PERSONAL Baby Chair.' 'David Soyer's PERSONAL Water Jugs.' 'David Soyer's PERSONAL Exit Sign.' All the cars in the parking lot. Every chair in the dining hall. Ugly painting in the coffee shop: 'David Soyer's PERSONAL Ugly Painting.' It can't have been one person. I cannot imagine the man-hours it took. We still don't know who did it, although I have some ideas. Such secrets stay with me!"

Some newcomers roll their eyes at Marlboro's customs. Joshua Smith, the urbane Cleveland Orchestra flutist, initially squirmed at the prospect of the square dance. "Do we *have* to?" he asked at dinner one night. But he grew to love the magic-mountain atmosphere of the place. "I wish I could somehow package this feeling and bring it back home with me to Cleveland," he said. Others complained of hearing too many Serkin stories, or of being dragged on too many picnics, or of being inundated with Germanic repertory. One young musician jokingly scripted a mock infomercial: "Remember a time when only German music was considered important? When Poulenc was not allowed? At Marlboro, you can live that time again." But sooner or later the skeptics fell into reveries about playing Mozart while gazing at trees in the late-afternoon light. And Poulenc is indeed played, on occasion.

There is a conscious plan behind the quirky lore. Marlboro is a long-running experiment in altering the metabolism of city-based performers. When Serkin began inviting his colleagues to Vermont, he wanted them to lose their worldliness, to fall into a slower rhythm. Uchida agrees, and proposes that Marlboro's quaint habits have a specific musical application. "The kids have to become more naïve," she told me. "Because there is something very naïve about this music that they play, even the very greatest. What is it about? Mountains, trees, birds, young love, that kind of thing. Of course, there is quite a bit more to it than that, but you must grasp the simplicity of the surface."

After dinner, the musicians gravitate to the coffee shop, where they often remain until late in the night. The conversation has the typical tempo and jargon of Generations X and Y, although the references are idiosyncratic ("Your fiddle was made in 1717, too? Oh, my God, that's so weird"). There's discussion of odd things that audience members say to performers after concerts ("I sometimes get suggestions for different things I could do with my hair," Rebecca Ringle said); of the perils of travelling with instruments on planes ("They said I'd have to check my viola case, so I took the viola with me on the plane and cradled it in my lap the whole way, like a baby," the violist Kyle Armbrust recalled); and of the relative lack of scandal at Marlboro this summer ("Last summer was a summer of Sappho"). Instrumentalists talk about hearing Schubert songs such as "Der Doppelgänger" for the first time; singers learn how to name Mozart concertos by Köchel number; Uchida is urged to listen to Björk.

Uchida usually appears in the coffee shop on the early side, then heads off to bed, or, as she puts it, "sneaks away without anyone noticing." One night, I dropped by her apartment for a visit. "Here is one of the finest residences of Marlboro," she said with mock pride, after negotiating a sticky lock. "It even has a bathroom." It was a one-bedroom basement apartment with white cement walls, sparsely furnished and wanly lit. Uchida lived here alone, although her partner, the British diplomat Robert Cooper, joined her on the final weekend. The piano was piled high with music that Uchida was studying. On a bookshelf was some not particularly light summer reading: the Inferno, "Hamlet," W. G. Sebald's "Austerlitz," volumes of Yeats and Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Stefan Zweig's autobiography, in German. As we spoke, Uchida set out two more little luxuries she permits herself: First Flush Darjeeling tea and Marcolini chocolates.

In some ways, Uchida is even more high-minded than Serkin, who surprised people by praising Vladimir Horowitz, the arch-virtuoso and the un-Serkin. Uchida has few kind words for several leading virtuosos of today. Her remarks were off the record. "I talk only about people whom I love," she said. Her warmest words were for the Romanian pianist Radu Lupu, whom she calls "the most talented guy I have ever met." She describes how she once tried to get Lupu to visit Marlboro. "I got very excited, describing how people do nothing but play music all day long. But he said no. His explanation was very funny. 'Mitsuko,' he said, 'I don't like music as much as you.' "

Her voice took on a confiding tone as she spoke of the composers with whom she spends her days. "Beethoven was the greatest altogether. Mozart was the greatest genius. And Schubert . . . " She drew in her breath, her eyes opening wide, her head tilting back. "He is the most beautiful. He is the one you will be listening to when you die." And then she spoke of a friend of hers who, on his deathbed, in a state of great pain, was offered morphine and refused it. "He knew that he would die only once. He wanted to see what it felt like. That is some sort of a person, yes? It is a great pity that you can't come back to tell the tale."

The Marlboro summer customarily ends on a Sunday afternoon in August, with a festive performance of Beethoven's "Choral Fantasy," for piano, chorus, and orchestra. Serkin used to bang it out at unbelievable volume, causing the piano, the floor, the walls, and, possibly, the Green Mountains to shake. Beethoven wrote the work in 1808, for a legendarily overlong benefit concert that also included the premières of his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. Composing in a hurry, he produced an uncharacteristically baggy piece that nonetheless surges with life. The main tune looks forward unmistakably to the "Ode to Joy," in the Ninth Symphony. The text celebrates the power of art to dispel the storm and stress of daily life. To quote from Philipp Naegele's translation:

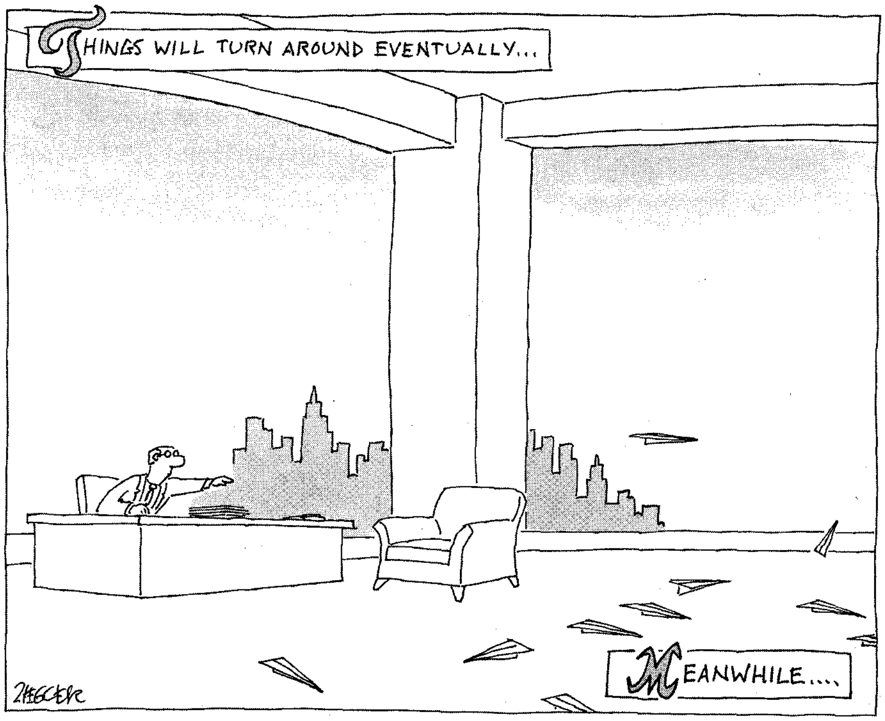
> When the magic sounds enchant
> And the word's solemnity speaks forth,
> Glorious things must come to be,
> Night and storms then turn to light.

In a way, the "Choral Fantasy" is Beethoven's Ninth without the world-historical baggage—the perpetually unfulfilled promise of liberation. Instead, it is an anthem of music's celebration of itself. Hence, perhaps, Serkin's abiding love for the piece.

Goode told me, "Many people felt that Serkin playing the 'Choral Fantasy' was a unique experience that could never be duplicated. After he died, the work was retired, and I thought that was the right decision. To my surprise, a few years later people said, 'You know, I think we have to have a "Choral Fantasy." ' We needed the catharsis."

It is never an especially polished affair. Serkin instituted the practice of inviting staff members, supporters, and musically inclined neighbors to sing in the chorus. Members of Marlboro's vocal program take the solos, guaranteeing that at least some of the singing will be on pitch and at full power, but there are always odd noises. In what had to be considered the final prank of the summer, one of the singers, the generally discerning tenor William Ferguson, decided that I should join the chorus. Trained as a pianist and an oboist, I have practically no singing experience, but nonetheless I was herded into the baritone section for the final rehearsal. I stood in front of two formidable young singers, the baritone John Moore and the bass-baritone Jeremy Galyon, who encircled me with such stentorian tones that I could almost believe I was making them myself. "I heard you," Ferguson said afterward, a little ambiguously.

At the podium was the pianist and conductor Ignat Solzhenitsyn, who grew up in Cavendish, Vermont, fifty miles to the north of Marlboro. His father, the novelist, had died the week before, and he had just returned from the funeral, in Moscow. The orchestra was a mixture of Marlboro-ites junior and senior, with Arnold Steinhardt sitting uncomplainingly in the back row and Soovin Kim serving as concertmaster. (Steinhardt wore a sign on his back: "Property of David Soyer.")


THINGS WILL TURN AROUND EVENTUALLY...
MEANWHILE....
ZIEGLER

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In trading Beethoven's ideas back and forth, the musicians were recapitulating in musical terms relationships that had formed over the summer. Uchida smiled or wiggled her eyebrows when different players took up the principal melody, as if resuming conversations that she had begun over Eggs McMarlboro at the coffee shop.

"It's great," Rebecca Ringle said to me during a break in the rehearsal. "You know everyone. Romie gets the theme, then James gets the theme."

The hall was packed for the performance, with many longtime friends of Marlboro in the crowd. Uchida assumed concert mode, unleashing the full strength of her mighty left hand in the ominous C-minor chords that open the piece. Throughout, she indulged in a bit more Romantic flamboyance than she ordinarily allows herself. She also issued a smattering of wrong notes, as if in tribute to Serkin's philosophy of seeking the perfection beyond precision—the truth of the noblest, most honest effort. The great moment for the chorus comes in the insistently joyous setting of the line "When love and strength are wed": "*Und Kraft! Und Kraft! Und Kr-a-a-a-a-ft!*" I had the feeling of being carried along by an enormous wave, and, however approximate the sound coming from my throat, it added to the power of the mass. And I reflected on the fact that even the most exalted music-making comes from an accumulation of everyday labor, inseparable from human relationships.

"It was at least inspired," Uchida said afterward. "Not the cleanest, but bloody inspired."

On my way home, driving along Route 9 toward the interstate, I took a detour and stopped at a little white church in Guilford. Rudolf Serkin is buried in the churchyard there, a few feet away from Adolf Busch. The violinist's name is almost hidden by thick-growing bushes, which metaphorically suggest what Busch and Serkin achieved when they came to America. At a time when Hitler was dragging German music into the mire, these pure spirits succeeded in transplanting their tradition to Vermont. In a wider sense, Marlboro represents the migration of tradition across centuries and continents: a Japanese-born woman passing along her understanding of Mozart and Schoenberg to new generations of American kids. Marlboro is an enchanting place, but, in the end, there is nothing especially remarkable about it. The remarkable thing is the power of music to put down roots wherever it goes. ♦

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FICTION

ZIGGURAT

BY STEPHEN O'CONNOR

The new girl sat at the computer in the corner playing Ziggurat, Panic!, and U-Turn. This was in the pine-panelled section of the Labyrinth, which is where the Minotaur had been hanging out lately, mainly because he didn't remember ever having been there before, and he liked sleeping on the pool table.

The new girl was smaller than most of the others. Peanut-colored. Her shoulders shook. Her fingers twitched on the computer keys, making noises like munching rodents. Her eyes were filled with rhomboids of white, then blue, then red. Yellow. Then red again. Lots of red. And they were separated by two wrinkles that said to the Minotaur, Go away! I'm too busy for you!

It is true that the Minotaur was very strong and that his head was nearly as wide as his shoulders. But in fact he didn't really look like a bull. He had no horns, no ring through his nose. He was just very, very ugly. His lips were fat and earthworm pink, his eyes were asymmetrical, and his eyebrows were like forests of black wire. The same with the hair on his head, and on his cheeks—which was indistinguishable from the hair on his body. He didn't walk like a normal person; he lumbered. That was just the way he was born.

All of the other girls had run when they saw the Minotaur. The women, too, and the boys. Some of the men had tried to fight—not that it mattered. The end had always been the same: the Minotaur patting his belly, pulling a sucked femur from his slick lips. But no one had ever been too busy.

He watched the way the new girl's shoulders sometimes rose as high as her ears, and how, at other times, she leaned way over to the right or left. But always that jerky twitching, always that smacking of rodent lips. After a while, he went right up behind her. He leaned down close enough to savor her smell. She didn't cringe. She didn't even glance away from the screen. Just: twitch, twitch, twitch, clickity-clackity-click, click-click-click. "Oof!" she would say. "Oh, my God!" On the screen, a square tower rose stone by stone. The stones were carried by angels. Red devils would attack the angels and the angels would drop the stones. Sometimes a big blue hand would come down out of the sky and sweep away one or more levels of the square tower, or even the whole thing. Every time the tower was reduced to rubble and dust, the face belonging to the hand would appear. It was a sad face, blue, with big round glasses and a mustache like a pair of bluebird wings. "Oof!" said the girl.

To the Minotaur, humanity consisted of loud noises and a series of cowardly and craven acts. Running, etc. Curses, self-soiling. It was not uncommon for one human being to push another into his path, or even to slay that human being and stretch the cadaver out on the ground as an offering. Human beings would needle the Minotaur with knives. They would sprinkle his hide with lead. They would pound him with their fists the way flies pound themselves against windows. They would attempt to reason. And sometimes they would get down on their knees and weep with their hands clasped in front of their chins. They would kiss his feet. None of this made any difference, of course. Wham! Crunch. Splurt. Hmm. Hmm. Tasty.

"Oh, no!" the new girl said. "Oh, shit." Her smell filled his sinuses and engendered slobber. At one point, he brought his lips so close to her shoulder that he could feel his breath bounce back off her skin. Why not? he thought. Why not right now? There's not a reason in the world. But he didn't. Instead, he went and leaned against the pool table. He would wait a bit. He wanted to see what would happen. His life was not exactly what you would call variety-packed, and he had the feeling that something unusual was in the works. Clickity-clackity-click. Twitch-jerk-twitch-twitch-twitch. "Oof!" He noticed how the new girl's hair swung heavily, like a velvet curtain. Dark brown, but also red. The color of old rust, only shiny. He noticed how parts of her jiggled, and how he could see every knob of her vertebrae except for the two between her shoulder blades. Thunder rumbled from one side of his gut to the other. Drool wet his belly. Finally, he got up and lumbered off to a tiled tunnel, where he could always find a skulking dog or two, sometimes whole packs. He baited a dog until it lunged. Then he snatched it midair and ripped it in half. As he returned to the pool table, a warmth spread from his belly through his chest and into his massive shoulders. He burped. Nothing had changed. Click-clickity. Twitch-jerk-jerk-jerk. He stretched out on the pool table and was soon asleep.

"Are you really the Minotaur?" the new girl asked when he opened his eyes. She was leaning over him, those same two wrinkles between her eyebrows, but this time they said, Hunh—weird. "*Are* you?" she asked. "When you first came in here, I thought you were, and I just kept on playing that game because I didn't want to see what you were going to do. But then you fell asleep." The new girl was silent awhile. Then she said, "I probably shouldn't be standing so close to you. I mean, you might just grab me and gobble me up. Right? If you really are the Minotaur, I mean." She took a step away and folded her arms across her chest. The lines had disappeared from between her eyes. There was a twist in one corner of her mouth, as if something were not right in her stomach. "So are you?" she said.

The Minotaur swung his legs around and sat up on the edge of the pool table. His head was at least a yard higher than hers; four of her could easily have stood between one of his shoulders and the other. As she waited for him to speak, she took another step backward, and whatever was not right in her stomach got worse.

"Yes," he said.

"Whoo-boy!" she said. She swallowed. "I guess my goose is cooked."

He looked at her for a long moment.

Then he slipped off the table and said, "Excuse me."

When the Minotaur returned, there was a trickle of blood descending from the corner of his mouth and pinkish flecks of gristle in his beard. The new girl was back at the computer, clicking away at the keys. She glanced up, and the Minotaur could tell from the way her eyes reverted instantly to the screen that she had seen something disgusting on his face, but she didn't say a word. Jerkity-click, click, click. Her eyes went yellow, then blue, then red. The Minotaur ran his hand over his beard and felt the flecks of gristle. He brushed them away and licked up the blood trickle

JORDAN AWAN

with his exceedingly long purple tongue. Then he stepped up beside her and looked at the screen. There was the sad-faced man with the bluebird-wings mustache.

"What are you playing?" the Minotaur asked.

"Ziggurat," the new girl told him, and when he didn't say anything in reply she told him about all the other games she had discovered on the computer. And then she said, "Basically, they're all disappointment games. Except this one. This one's about ambition. You're supposed to build the Tower of Babel before God knocks it down. But that usually ends up being a disappointment game, too." And when the Minotaur still didn't say anything she said, "Basically, this is a pretty stupid bunch of games."

"Then why do you play them?" the Minotaur said.

"Just . . ." The new girl blushed, then went pale. "Well . . . you know. It's like I said before." After that, she put her hands in her lap, became very quiet, and seemed to shrink to half her size. The Minotaur figured that this was her way of telling him the time had come for him to eat her. But, just as his big lips went glossy and he was baring his shovel teeth, she said, "I like to play pool, though. Pool's a great game. Do you like to play pool?"

The Minotaur looked over at the table, which, he was embarrassed to discover, had been stained by many nights of drool, as well as by other secretions. He wasn't quite sure why this embarrassed him, however. Embarrassment had not played a big part in his long life.

"I don't know," he said. And when he saw that the new girl did not fully comprehend his answer he said, "I've never played."

"Do you want me to teach you?" she asked.

The Minotaur shrugged.

The new girl beat the pants off the Minotaur three times in a row. Even though he didn't particularly seem to mind, she worried that he might get irritated or bored if he kept losing, so she decided to acquaint him with a more advanced level of strategy. She gave him tips about wrist action, momentum, angles of incidence, about which part of the cue ball to hit when, and about the need to care just enough that you noticed you cared, but no more than that. The Minotaur turned out to be a fast learner. On their fifth game, he beat her fair and square.

Against the wall beside the pool table was a half-size refrigerator jammed with beer. "Oh, wow!" the new girl said. She looked at the Minotaur and pulled out a bottle of Rolling Rock. "Want one?"

"Thanks." He took the bottle and held it up a few inches from the end of his nose. His bristling eyebrows buckled in a way that made him seem excessively stupid, like a caveman examining a light bulb. When he saw the new girl twist the top off her bottle, he did the same, and when she took a sip he did, too. "Oh!" he said, and examined the bottle even more attentively.

"Something wrong?" the new girl asked.

"No," he said. He took another sip, which he kept in his mouth a long time, his eyebrows parting, moving up his forehead, then shooting back down into a collision of uncertainty. When he swallowed, he seemed to be paying acute attention to the fluid's descent along his esophagus and into his belly.

"Haven't you ever had a beer before?" the new girl said.

"Not exactly."

"Not *exactly*?"

"I mean no, I guess."

"Wow!" the new girl said. "You've never shot pool, you've never played computer games, you've never drunk a beer—what have you been doing with your life?"

The Minotaur shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "Wandering, mostly."

"Wandering?"

"Yeah." His big lips formed an upside-down U, expressing something between defensiveness and disappointment.

"Just wandering?"

He glanced up at the ceiling and tilted his head noncommittally. "Of course," he said, "I'm always . . . You know: hungry . . . I mean—"

The Minotaur stopped talking.

The new girl didn't say anything, either.

After close to a minute of silence, he said, "Sorry."

"Don't worry about it," she said, but didn't meet his eye.

There was another long silence.

"Just so you know," the new girl said, "I'm not actually a virgin. That was just something I . . . I mean, who likes to talk about that kind of stuff with their mother, you know? So I just let her believe whatever she wanted to, and . . . Well, maybe that wasn't such a hot idea. . . . Anyhow, the main thing is, you might not like the way I taste. Too tough or something. You might get indigestion from me."

The new girl laughed nervously.

The Minotaur made a small noise deep in his throat and looked away. Then he drew the back of his hand across his lips.

"What's a virgin?" the Minotaur asked. Their half-empty bottles stood on the edge of the pool table. They were playing another game.

"You know," she insisted.

He didn't.

"Yes, you do. They always told us virgins were like . . . you know: like your favorite—" She couldn't say it.

When the Minotaur still seemed confused, she gave him a hint. Then she gave him a bigger hint. Finally, she just explained the concept of virginity straight out.

"Huh," he said. And then he said, "I can't see why that would affect the taste." Then he didn't say anything else.

The new girl stood the butt of her cue stick on her big toe and looked down at the floor. She was shrinking again.

What is the Labyrinth but so much human junk? That's how the Minotaur saw it. Cathedrals, bus stations, diners, bowling alleys, subway tunnels, endless basement corridors—they all seemed profoundly pointless to him, not just because they were generally empty and unused but as a basic fact of their existence. He could tell that humans didn't share his opinion. He would find them on their knees in the pink and purple pools beneath stained-glass windows, their brows dark with grief and desire, their lips rippling with unvoiced words. He would find them looking impatiently at classroom clocks, unable to keep their feet still beneath their desks, or sitting atop vinyl-covered swivel stools, savoring their own tasteless and puny repasts, or intertwined in bed, making all the chest and throat noises of aggression. Idiocy. All of it. None of the things they yearned for would come to pass. All their beliefs about destiny and justice, all their rituals, injunctions, inhibitions and plain-as-the-nose-on-your-face truths: trash, irrelevant, wrong. Their gooses were cooked—royally—and always had been. This was shocking news to his victims. He could see it in their eyes. How could they be so stupid?

The new girl asked a human question: "What's your favorite part of the Labyrinth?"

The Minotaur's unequal eyes went still for a moment, then he shrugged.

"Come on!" the new girl said. "You must have a favorite place!"

Here came that embarrassment again, that sweatiness at his hairline, that prickling in his armpits, that heart surge which was like a form of strangulation. Why was this happening?

"Come on!" the new girl said again. "I know you're thinking of one! I can tell! Don't be shy!"

The new girl's face was like a soap bubble in candlelight. Her voice: like the slow plinking of a music box. Her smell: every hair on his body stood upright.

The Minotaur turned and lumbered down the tunnel.

Already walking, the new girl called out, "Do you want me to follow you?" And when he didn't reply: "Where are you taking me?"

Before all else, the Minotaur was the agent of his own appetite. But sometimes, in philosophical moods, he would think of himself as a messenger bearing this ultimate truth: You were created to be destroyed. That was it. Simple. And such a shame that none of his victims had time to benefit from it.

The Minotaur led the new girl down tunnels that seemed to have been gnawed in stone by giant worms: wobbling tunnels, dark, round; their walls oozing and their ceilings hung with long strands of algal slime that sometimes slapped the new girl wetly in the face, and at other times adhered to her cheeks, her neck, her fingertips. There were pipe-filled tunnels so hot that the inside of the new girl's nose cracked like the bottom of an evaporated lake. Tunnels lined as far as her eye could see with toilet stalls and urinals, many of which had overflowed onto the floor. One tunnel connected a vacant basketball court to a walk-in refrigerator, while another was paved with glossy pink marble and smelled of incense and candle wax. And in yet another tunnel the slapping of her own feet and the Minotaur's echoed and re-echoed, so that it seemed to the new girl as if whole nations of bats were flapping angrily around her head. Within minutes of trotting after the Minotaur, the new girl realized that she would never be able to find her way back to the room with the pool table, the beer, and the computer games. At every turn, the geometry of the world was reinvented. Her footsteps were wholly digested by the past.

Whenever the new girl and the Minotaur entered a diner, there were always two cups of steaming coffee waiting on the counter. And, nearby, two little stainless-steel pitchers of half-and-half, always brimful and cool, even though there was never anyone else there: no customers, no staff.

"Where is everybody?" the new girl asked, and instantly regretted the question, because she already knew the answer. And when the Minotaur started to speak she put her finger on his lips and said, "No."

The Minotaur saw the new girl's eyes narrow in a way that he couldn't interpret. Fear? Pride that she alone had been spared? Some variety of awe? He didn't dare ask.

"Haven't you ever tried to escape?" the new girl asked.

"Escape?" the Minotaur said.

"You know, get outside."

"Outside what?"

"This," the new girl said. "The Labyrinth."

The Minotaur was silent for a moment. A gloss of sweat materialized on his fingertips.

"How do you know there's someplace to escape to?" he said.

"Because I remember it."

"Tell me one moment you remember."

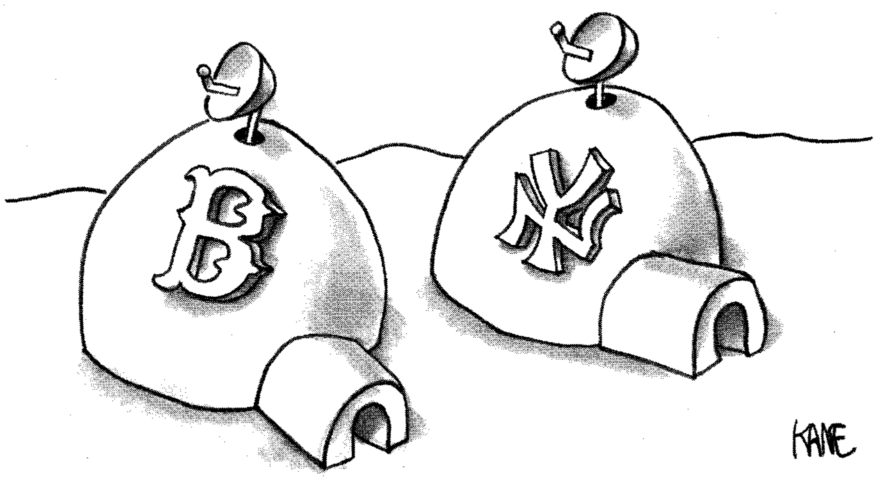
"O.K.," the new girl said.

She looked with the in-turned eyes of memory, but it was like looking into a house with every wall painted black. And all the lights out. And every shutter down. The new girl was puzzled: why was her brain so blank? She felt her way along corridors. She went in and out of rooms, up and down stairs. Black and black and black and black. Finally, she saw a chink of light. She walked toward it, down a long, long corridor, and gradually the chink became a door and the door became a room, and inside the room her mother was sitting in a rocking chair before a white fireplace, and her father and her little brother were lying on a rag rug, playing chess.

She started to tell the Minotaur.

He held up his hand. "Wait a second." He was lumbering again. "Follow me."

He led her left, then right. In total darkness. Up and down stairs. A long, long corridor. Finally, they were in a room where there was an oak rocker. And, on the seat of the rocker, a needlepoint cushion that the new girl's mother had made herself, portraying a smiling lamb jumping a fence. There was a white fireplace in which hooks of orange light leaped silently from wood to blackened brick. There was a chessboard on a rag rug. The king on her father's side of the chessboard had just fallen over. Its bottom rolled around the pivot of its top, then went over the board's edge and stopped as it hit the rug. The rocking chair was moving, too: back and forth, back and forth, as if her mother were still in it.

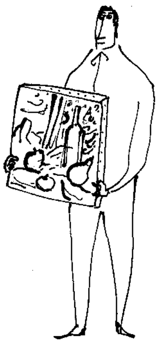


“Is this what you were talking about?” the Minotaur asked.

The new girl didn’t answer. After a while, she said, “What happened to my family?”

The Minotaur pretended not to hear her question, then glanced around the room as if he’d lost something.

The new girl tried to escape. She ran down tunnel after tunnel. She turned left. She turned right. But every turn was entirely arbitrary. And every tunnel only took her to dozens of other tunnels, some of which went on for miles, and ended in points of light so distant and pale they were like stars in other galaxies. She hid in the back of closets where mothball gas brought tears to her eyes. She hid under cars in subterranean parking lots, her cheek resting in gritty-slick splatterings of motor oil. She buried herself under heaps of orange, yellow, and copper-colored leaves. But, no matter where she hid, the tectonic rumble of the Minotaur’s footfalls would mount and mount, until finally the door behind which she cowered was wrenched from its hinges, or the wall against which she had pressed herself was reduced to noise, dust, nuggets of mortar, and shattered brick.



“There you are!” the Minotaur would say. He’d hold out his granite hand, and the new girl would let herself be led away. Maybe he’s not so bad, she’d tell herself. Maybe everything I’ve heard is wrong.

But then in the night: those screams, that weird whistle of tearing flesh. And in the morning, everywhere she went: that fetid stink, those heaps of sucked white femurs, fibulas, tibias, skulls, ribs.

One time, the new girl asked the Minotaur, “Why haven’t you eaten me?” His answer: “Because I’m not hungry.”

The Minotaur was a novice of arc and swell and dip, a new-minted connoisseur of smooth and tender and sway. That little snippet of bird-peep that entered the new girl’s voice whenever she got excited, or when she thought something she had done was stupid—he wanted to put that in a box, tie it up with a leather thong, and keep it around his neck. That way she had of elbowing him in the ribs, rolling her eyes, slapping herself on the top of her head and saying, “Only joking!”—why did his cobblestone feet always do a shuffling dance when she did that? Why did his shoulders squinch together and his floppy lips twist up at the corners? To his embarrassment was added shame, and the Minotaur found that he could bear his message of ultimate truth only on the sly, when the new girl was asleep, or when she was looking the other way. He took to wearing a kerchief and giving his lips a hasty wipe after every meal. Then, one day, the new girl was gone, and the Minotaur worried that, in a moment of thoughtlessness, he had gobbled her up. When he didn’t see her for several weeks, he could think of no other explanation. A year passed, and then a century, and new-girllessness became a fact—as simple and discrete as other facts. In a way, life became easier for the Minotaur, as easy as it had been before the new girl’s arrival. But only in a way. In another way, the Minotaur began to wonder if he was getting too old for his job. His vocabulary increased. To “embarrassment” and “shame” he added “joyless.” He added “regret.” He added “lost.”

There were sections of the Labyrinth where the walls were so far apart that, if you stood beside one, you could not see the other, and where the ceiling rose so high that wads of illuminated water vapor drifted beneath it, and a ten-thousand-watt sun was dragged across it on nearly invisible tracks. In the middle of such a place, the Minotaur constructed a square of rocks a mile across. On top of this square, he constructed another, and then another and another, until what had merely been unlikely geology became a wall, and what had been a wall became a tower. Centuries passed, and the tower rose to such heights that to look up at it or down from it was to become dizzy. There were collapses that began like a massive clearing of a throat and ended like a prairie shuddering under the hooves of gigantic cattle. The Minotaur developed new technology. He perfected his technique and, after a while, he knew he could not fail. And so it became clear that the tower was a pyramid, diminishing at the end of every new level by the width of a stairstep just broad enough to accommodate the Minotaur’s feet. And with each new layer of stone the air got warmer and began to smell, at first something like a laundry hamper, then more like inside the mouth of a sun-baked cadaver. Eventually, the Minotaur discovered that the ceiling was not the translucent blue plastic he had always assumed it was but blue-painted plaster, cracked and warped with age. When his tower was high enough that he could touch his upraised elbow to the ceiling, he went all the way down to the bottom and climbed all the way back up to the top carrying a long stone roughly the size of his leg. He used this stone to knock a hole through the plaster, lathing, and masonry of the supposed sky, and when the stone rattled off into emptiness on the other side he reached up into the hole and pulled himself through.

There he was: belly down in a cinder-block tunnel. But, after only a few yards, the tunnel became panelled in wood, and floored with a charcoal-gray indoor-outdoor carpet. Not long afterward, he found himself in the pine-panelled room where he had first met the new girl, only the pool table had been gouged repeatedly—the felt ragged and upstanding, a corona of slate dust spewing from every gash—and the half-size refrigerator was on its side, door open, empty of beer. He left the room and wandered for a long time down a series of corridors so dark he could find his way only by memory.

He saw the face: blue. That bluebird-wings mustache. Round glasses. Eyes transcendently sad—with the welling sadness of an infant. The sadness of what-have-I-done? The sadness of this-can’t-be-true. The blue-faced man was sitting at a desk on which there were two stacks of crinkled, smoothed-out paper that had obviously been rescued from a trash can. In his lap rested a battered leather briefcase from which more papers stuck up like pale, petrified flames. He clutched a single piece in each of his upraised hands.

“Excuse me,” the Minotaur said.

The blue-faced man lowered the piece of paper in his right hand onto the left-hand stack, transferred it instantly to the right-hand stack, then lifted it once again into the air.

“Excuse me,” the Minotaur repeated.

Only then did the blue-faced man look in his direction.

“I was just wondering,” the Minotaur said.

The sadness of I-can’t-take-it-anymore. The sadness of what’s-the-point?

The Minotaur felt his heart go weak, and his hands.

"I'm sorry," the Minotaur said, and for a long time he couldn't speak, deprived utterly of strength.

"I was wondering," he said at last. "I was wondering if you had seen—"

"Leave me alone," said the blue-faced man.

"I'm sorry," said the Minotaur.

"Please," said the blue-faced man.

Hammers, chains, ice picks, and tire irons. At the intersection of four corridors, a gang of new arrivals made short work of the Minotaur and left him stretched out on the paving stones, so much hacked meat. When he opened his eyes the new girl was leaning over him, two lines between her eyebrows. "Why didn't you fight back?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said.

Then he said, "I didn't want to."

"Hunh," the new girl said. "Weird."

The Minotaur closed his eyes again, and when he opened them he was alone. Utterly. Where the new girl had been there was nothing but a twist of phosphene, peanut inflected; a stirring of empty air.

He rolled onto his hands and knees, then stood up. Blood trickled from his fingertips, belly, and chin the way water trickles in a cave. Echoing drips. Minute gurgles.

The Minotaur wandered drafty spaces that smelled like a paper mill. All that pounding. So much muck on his feet. Sometimes a yellowish light laminated a bend in the tunnel wall, and the Minotaur was sure the new girl was hiding just around the corner. But, as his footfalls shook dust streams from the ceiling, the lamination would dwindle to gossamer cross-hatching, to a golden web, to a few glowing strands, to winking glints, and then, finally, to only the possibility of light. On and on and on. The central aisle of an airliner, the back seat of a car (stale popcorn crammed into cushion cracks), a coal mine, a hospital waiting room, a long tunnel in which a hot breeze blew first in one direction and then the other. So many varieties of emptiness. For centuries. Millennia. But, every now and then, just ahead: the patter of foot flesh striking wet stone, or the lip and tongue smacks of very small mouths. And so, once again, the Minotaur would start to run. Every time. He couldn't help himself.

"Oof!"

Nights, when his eyes were closed, the new girl came to lie within the hollow created by his arms and legs. But always she was silent. Never a word. Her warmth was there. His sinuses were filled with her smell. His memory was able to adhere to her smoothness, to her rough parts, to her every swelling and concavity, but only in a way that was like an ache—like a hunger feeding upon itself. Those hands, strong enough to crush jackal throats: useless.

A train station with breath-grimed marble walls and an arched ceiling portraying the night sky in sapphire tile and bits of gleaming gold. A vast hangar, in which a fully inflated dirigible—gondola doors open, gangplanks lowered to a wooden embarkation deck—hovered, humming, awaiting passengers. A stadium, klieg lights glaring, the playing field a kind of green flame; and the parking lot around the stadium so enormous that the Minotaur felt sure he was coming again to that place where he had built his tower. On and on. One foot in front of the other. The walls receding to such a degree that they might as well not have been there. The ceiling growing higher and higher, until finally it was obscured by the blueness of empty air. Sounds arrived from great distances. Indecipherable. No echo. On and on and on. The Minotaur lumbered across a rusty bog empurpled with heather. Then sun—all at once. A clean, salty breeze. Golden sand. Dune after dune, rising and falling beneath his feet, then finally falling, falling, falling—all the way to a gray-green-blue vastness, riffled, glinting, and crossed by the cloud shadows as far as the eye could see.

The Minotaur stopped for a moment on that last sandy crest. The wind buffeted his ears. A line of pelicans glided prehistorically just above his head. After that, the sand fell away beneath his lunging feet. He grew smaller and smaller. Every now and then he would vanish, only to reappear on a lower incline of the dune, and then upon another even lower. Until at last—there he was: a tiny figure moving up the shore. A minute silhouette against the mirror sand. A wavering speck. Then smaller. Ever smaller. ♦

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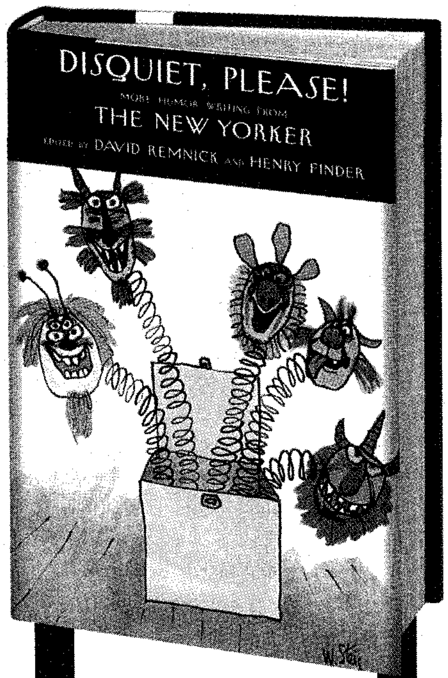
If laughter is the best medicine, Disquiet, Please! *is a wonder drug.*



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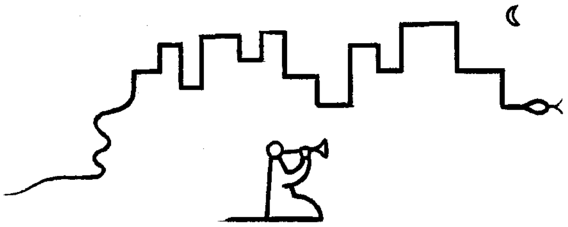


BOOKS

LOVE, IRANIAN STYLE

A new novel pits passion and repression.

BY JAMES WOOD

Sometimes, the soft literary citizens of liberal democracy long for prohibition. Coming up with anything to write about can be difficult when you are allowed to write about anything. A day in which the most arduous choice has been between "grande" and "tall" does not conduce to literary strenuousness. And what do we know about life? Our grand tour was only through the gently borderless continent of Google. Nothing constrains us. Perhaps we look enviously at those who have the misfortune to live in countries where literature is taken seriously enough to be censored, and writers venerated with imprisonment. What if writing were made a bit more exigent for us? What if we had less of everything? It might make our literary culture more "serious," certainly more creatively ingenious. Instead of drowning in choice, we would have to be inventive around our thirst. Tyranny is the mother of metaphor, and all that.

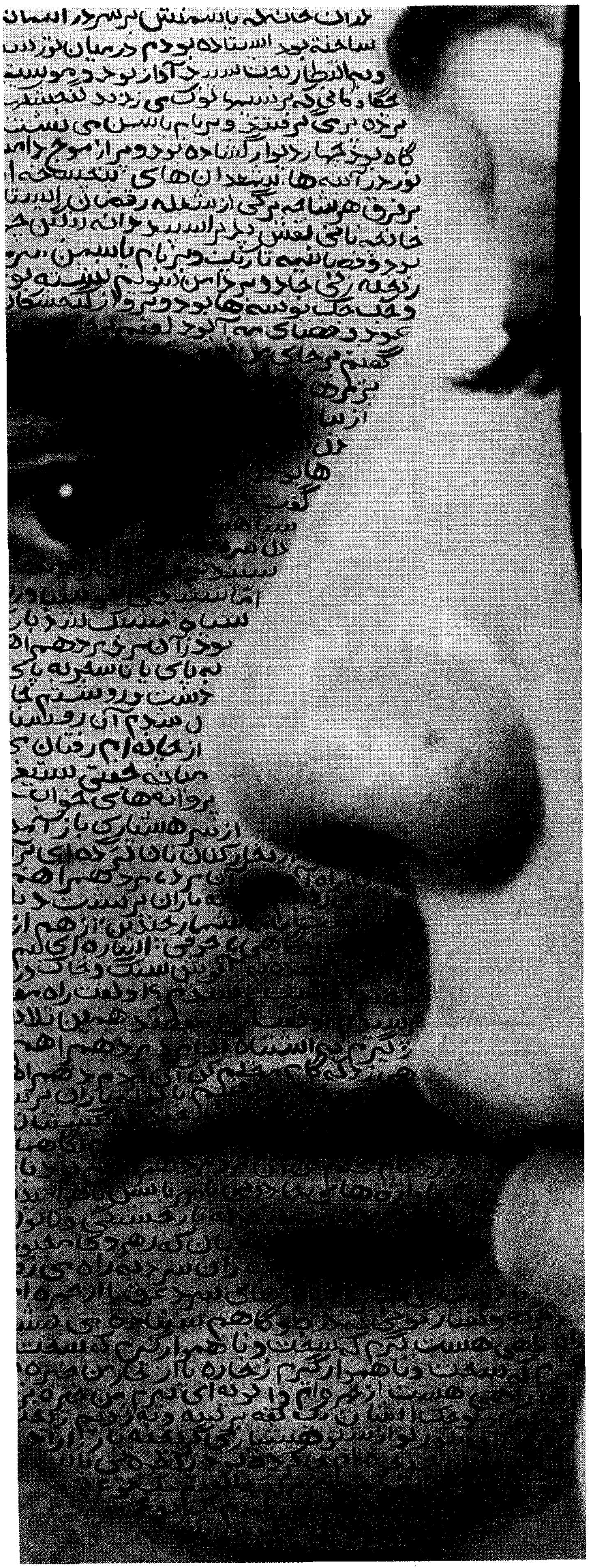
Among other things, Shahriar Mandanipour's novel "Censoring an Iranian Love Story" (translated by Sara Khalili; Knopf; $25) is a tough reply to such maundering. Mandanipour, a distinguished Iranian novelist and short-story writer, was prohibited from publishing his fiction in his native country between 1992 and 1997. He came to the United States in 2006, as an International Writers Project Fellow at Brown University, and stayed in America. This novel, his first major work to be translated into English, was written in Farsi but cannot be read in Iran. His book is thus acutely displaced: it had to have been written with an audience outside of Iran in mind, but in a language that this audience would mostly not understand; it depends on translation for its being, yet its being is thoroughly Iranian, lovingly and allusively so, dense with local reference. And it takes as its subject exactly these paradoxes, for it is explicitly about what can and cannot be written in contemporary Iranian fiction.

Novelists fret over how to get their characters into and out of rooms, but what if their characters weren't allowed to be in those rooms in the first place? How might one write a love story about a young man and woman, set in a country in which the unmarried couple is not allowed to spend any significant time together? At the beginning of "Censoring an Iranian Love Story," two Tehran natives, Dara and Sara, meet at a student demonstration outside Tehran University, and spend the next two hundred and eighty pages attempting not so much to consummate their relationship as simply to begin it. It is like something out of Laurence Sterne, and Mandanipour, who dedicates his book to the postmodern novelist Robert Coover (among others), is playfully alive to the elasticated comedy of a digressive story that expends all its energy on failing to start.

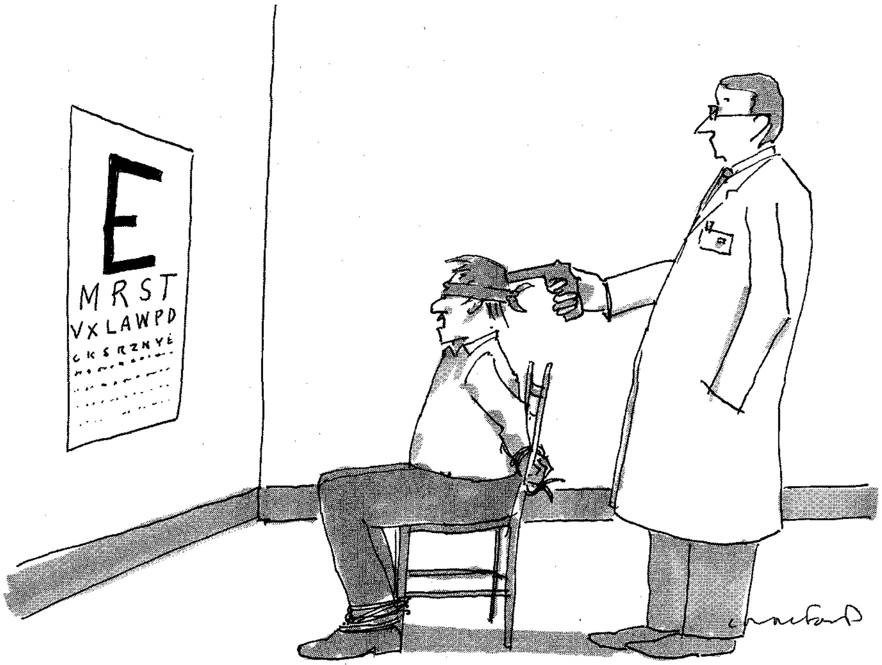
But this narrative foreplay isn't just play, because it is forced and not free, conditioned by Iranian political reality. Dara and Sara cannot walk along a street without attracting attention from the morals patrols. If caught, they might have to pretend to be siblings. An Internet café could be just as risky. They cannot freely visit each other at home. Where to go? The author, who likes to break into his narrative with asides and gossip, tells us that he once wrote a story in which he led his amorous couple to a cemetery as their meeting place. "At the time, the anticorruption officers' imagination did not extend to a girl and a boy taking advantage of the grave of an unsuspecting and helpless dead mother to set the stage for their sin." Later in the novel, for much the same reason, Dara and Sara, keeping one step ahead of the imagination of the morals police, take refuge in a hospital emergency room, where people will be too busy to notice them. And, in addition to the characters' material constraints, there are the writer's. Literature is, of course, censored in Iran. The author jokes about how Iran is subconsciously practicing "the late Roland Barthes's theory of the Death of the Author," and likens this control to political torture and disappearance: "So it is that many stories . . . in maneuvering their way through the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance either are wounded, lose certain limbs, or are with finality put to death."

Mandanipour's inventive way of depicting this censorship in his novel is to inscribe it, quite literally, in the pages of his novel. So throughout the book, whenever the story of Dara and Sara becomes unacceptably political or erotic, offending sentences are crossed out—not blotted out (as was done in Joseph Weisberg's recent C.I.A. thriller "An Ordinary Spy") but struck through with a horizontal line, so that the reader can examine what might constitute a literary offense in Iran. The text is veiled, but the author lifts the veil for his non-Iranian audience. A typical passage begins, "Sara is studying Iranian literature at Tehran University." But the following sentence is crossed out: "However, in compliance with an unwritten law, teaching contemporary Iranian literature is forbidden in Iranian schools and universities." When Sara goes into a store to buy sunglasses, the store owner, a man, watches her, and says, with a sigh, "What a shame for those beautiful eyes and that tantalizing face to be hidden behind

ABOVE: PHILIPPE WEISBECKER; OPPOSITE: SHIRIN NESHAT, "WHISPERS" FROM "WOMEN OF ALLAH SERIES" (1997)/GLADSTONE GALLERY



Shahriar Mandanipour's lovers are forever trying to elude the m


E
M R S T
V X L A W P D

"Worse."

• •

those glasses." The phrase "and that tantalizing face" is struck out.

It is an effective, simple idea that gets less suggestive as the novel proceeds—partly because Mandanipour does not much vary the kind of material that is redacted, and partly because the redacted material is, of course, almost perfectly legible. The text thus has it both ways, simultaneously veiling and unveiling itself for the Western reader, in a slightly too easy pact. More powerful is a figurative vandalism: it is the novel's insistent argument that a modern Iranian love story can hardly be written at all, because it is contaminated not only by the fact of censorship but by the idea of censorship, and bound by literary conventions. The reader is made aware that behind Sara and Dara stands the famous twelfth-century Iranian poem about two lovers, "Khosrow and Shirin." In one of his many mischievous authorial interventions, Mandanipour notes that ancient Sufi love poetry often likens the body of a woman to a cypress tree, her eyes to those of a gazelle, her breasts to pomegranates, and so on. He implies that this level of figurative ornament is a kind of self-censorship by simile. So the tale of Sara and Dara is not only scored by the censor's markings; it is constantly lapsing into cliché and conventional euphemism, because direct erotic language is not possible. "Sara's lips resemble plump ripe cherries with their delicate skin about to split from the heat of the sun," the author writes, knowingly. This love story cannot be told naturally, only unnaturally, with much interruption and self-consciousness: "Exactly a year before the political demonstration I told you about, on a spring day—and in old Iranian love stories there is a beautiful spring day with the song of nightingales and other pleasant-sounding birds resonating from sentences—Sara appears at the public library."

"Censoring an Iranian Love Story" is not simply prohibited by censorship but made by it. For Mandanipour, the censor is a kind of co-writer of the book, and he appears often in this novel, under the alias of Porfiry Petrovich (the detective who chases Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov). We see him squabbling with Mandanipour, chatting to another Iranian writer, plotting alternative stories for Dara and Sara, striking out offensive phrases, and finally falling in love with Sara. He is a heavy presence in the novel, and is both creator and critic; the writer is always anticipating the imagination of prohibition even as he tries to outwit it. Even more interesting, the writer, in this situation, becomes his characters; he wants what they want. Their freedom is bound up with his. This interdependency does provocative things to the relation of fiction to reality. On the one hand, fiction becomes more real—real enough to strike lines through. On the other hand, fiction becomes more fictional—multiple writers (the author and his censors) are making up a collective story as they go along, improvising, cutting, editing, bargaining with each other. One of the great successes of this book is how thoroughly it persuades the reader that a novel about censorship could not help also being a novel about fiction-making; and it thus brings a political gravity to a fictive self-consciousness sometimes abused by the more weightless postmodernism.

Since the official love story can barely get off the ground, Mandanipour supplies the unofficial version, in an essayistic running commentary that often displaces the official tale for pages on end. (The formal love story appears on the page in bold type, the authorial interpolations in roman.) This commentary, in which Mandanipour writes as himself, entertainingly informs the reader about the riskier aspects of the two protagonists, the history of censorship in Iran, the revolution of 1979, and so on. We learn that Dara, before he met Sara, was studying filmmaking at Tehran University, and was imprisoned for leftist activity. He was released, only to find that his place at the university had disappeared. He earned money by selling videos of Western auteurs (Welles, Bergman, Antonioni) but was arrested and imprisoned again, and this time was put in solitary confinement. Dara's father suffered more acute repetitions: a Communist before 1979, he was arrested under the Shah and put in the notorious Evin prison. After the revolution, he was triumphantly released, but six years later was rearrested, once again "for the crime of being a Communist," and sent back to the same prison. "The beggars have changed places, but the lash goes on," as Yeats has it. Mandanipour likes these politically circular stories, painful and faintly comic in their seriality, and he is often mordant about the great revolution that turned out not to be one:

> At Tehran University, students demonstrated against American imperialism, and the army attacked the university and killed

three students. University students and political activists named this day University Students' Day, and every year on the sixteenth of Āzar there were demonstrations and protests against the Shah's regime. The students would break the windows of college buildings, and the university guards would attack them. They would beat them up and arrest some of them, and in jail they would flog them or sodomize them with Coca-Cola bottles. They would then release them so that on the next sixteenth of Āzar the students could break even more windows. However, after the revolution, the Islamic Republic's regime executed so many students and political oppositionists every day that no one could name a particular day for a particular occasion. Therefore, all our days became the sixteenth of Āzar, meaning all our days became days on which a group of people were killed for freedom. The masterwork of the Islamic Republic was that it eradicated the importance of occasions.

The first hundred pages or so of "Censoring an Iranian Love Story" are exciting. Mandanipour's writing is exuberant, bonhomous, clever, profuse with puns and literary-political references; the reader unversed in contemporary Iranian fiction might easily think of Kundera (who is alluded to), or of the Rushdie of "Midnight's Children" (who is not). Mandanipour is a charming and often witty guide: "Perhaps the banning of neckties in Iran—which I will elaborate on later—was because they can be perceived as an arrow pointing to a man's lower organ." There is a joke—one of those universal jokes which, one feels, must be popular with writers in all totalitarian cultures—when Dara is rearrested, and his young, pious interrogator asks him about his studies in film. Using the structuralist language of film theory, Dara tells the man that "the language of cinema has its own distinct codes. People have to learn these codes. Once they do, they will completely relate to the language of cinema." The interrogator's eyes sparkle: "Codes? There are codes in films? . . . Do you know these codes?" Dara has just sealed his fate.

One problem with the form of the novel, however, is that Mandanipour's unofficial authorial commentary is soon of greater interest to the reader than the official love story. A novel in which the informal, uncensored critique gradually overwhelmed the formal, censored story would have been fascinating, and gripping in its way. Instead, Mandanipour perseveres with the formal tale of Dara and Sara, who are interesting whenever the author writes unofficially about them, and boring whenever they are participants in "an Iranian Love Story." This is partly because their role is didactic: they are there to show that an Iranian love story can barely be written, and have no quiddity as literary characters. But the larger problem is that Mandanipour overwhelms his young protagonists with self-conscious literary references and metafictional high jinks. Mr. Petrovich makes too many appearances in the story. We get the point that he is a co-creator of the tale, and we also get the point that Mandanipour, who communicates with his characters (for instance, it is he who whispers to Dara that he should go with Sara to the refuge of the emergency room), is their ultimate manipulator, their God. "I have tried to dissuade Dara from what he is planning, but I have been no match for him," he writes toward the end of the novel. "I see clearly how my love story is moving in a direction that I never intended. The story is falling apart." Indeed it is, and it is both unaffecting and heavy-handed when, on the next page, Dara grabs the author by the throat and complains, "You shouldn't have written me like this. You shouldn't have written me as browbeaten and pathetic. . . . You wrote me like this to pass your story through censorship." Meanwhile, a hunchback from "The Thousand and One Nights" is making regular appearances, and Mandanipour tries to spice up the love story with a rival suitor, named Sinbad. The book's lowest moment is reached when Gogol's Akaky Akakievich, the clerk from the story "The Overcoat," turns up in Tehran, and asks Mandanipour, who is standing on a street with Mr. Petrovich, "Have you seen the thief who stole my cloak?" Even Robert Coover might itch to delete such a scene from one of his students' fictions. There are *some* good forms of censorship.

The novel's uncertainty is strange, not just because Mandanipour has confidence and authority to spare but also because his novel refers to a shimmeringly beautiful Iranian example of how to tell a blocked love story—Abbas Kiarostami's film "Through the Olive Trees." As in everything he does, Kiarostami narrates a complexly self-conscious tale with the utmost simplicity: an Iranian director is making a film, in rural northern Iran, and needs a leading man and woman. The young actor who is eventually selected turns out, in his ordinary life, to be in love with the woman who is playing opposite him. He has asked her to marry him, but she has refused, because he has no house and is illiterate. On the film set, however, the couple must act as husband and wife. Kiarostami wrings the most tender comedy out of such small things as the woman's refusal to address the actor, on set, as "Mr. Hossein," as she would do if he were her husband. The actors have to do a scene in which the husband asks his wife where his socks are. They are not very good at it, and numerous takes ensue. Off the set, the young man, filled with ardor, assures the skeptical young woman that if they were really married he would actually know where his socks were.

It is this luminous film—not named, but clearly recognizable—that Dara and Sara watch, in a Tehran cinema, in "Censoring an Iranian Love Story": "During the final scenes of the movie, they even have tears in their eyes." Where Mandanipour's love story fails to generate any great interest of its own, the two young actors in "Through the Olive Trees" are utterly solid and realized; and, paradoxically, their solidity is not softened by Kiarostami's postmodern self-consciousness but magically enhanced by it. (One would happily forever watch the two of them rehearsing the scene about the socks.) Kiarostami's fascination with fictionality—his films often collapse the theatrical fourth wall—emerges naturally from his great interest in the real, as one might be very interested, say, in colors because one loved flowers, or in angels because one believed in God. To complain that Mandanipour does not equal Kiarostami's almost Chekhovian humaneness and delicacy would be unfair; for one thing, Mandanipour is politically much more savage than the wily neorealist survivor, who has lived all his life in Iran, and has different ambitions. But Kiarostami's film does demonstrate that one can beautifully combine the telling of a love story with a deep inquiry into the artifice of telling such a story—and, indeed, that the two concerns belong together. ♦

BOOKS

BABY TALK

The fuss about parenthood.

BY JILL LEPORE

"I Am a Failure as a Mother," a talk given on NBC radio in 1932 by Clara Savage Littledale, mother of two, has a lot to answer for, including a couple of new memoirs by grownups determined to profess their parental ineptitude: "Home Game: An Accidental Guide to Fatherhood" (Norton; $23.95), by Michael Lewis, father of three; and "Bad Mother: A Chronicle of Maternal Crimes, Minor Calamities, and Occasional Moments of Grace" (Doubleday; $24.95), by Ayelet Waldman, mother of four. Littledale was the founding editor of *Parents' Magazine;* in the nineteen-thirties, her radio program—a column broadcast over the wireless—filled Emily Post's noontime slot on Wednesdays, Miss Manners's day off. Lewis and Waldman are columnists, too. "Home Game" started as a series on *Slate*, episodes in which Lewis, tenderhearted and befuddled, tries to figure out the unwritten rules of the "new fatherhood"; "Bad Mother" revisits essays first written for *Salon*, in which Waldman uses stories about her family to argue that there's no such thing as a good mother. If you've ever read a parenting blog, and I don't say you ought to, you have a good idea what lies at the heart of these books: ersatz confession. Lewis finds newborns hard to love; Waldman hires a maid to clean up after her maid. Lewis tells all—all!—about his vasectomy; Waldman provides her sexual history. Waldman insists that how any woman rears her kids is nobody's never-you-mind. "Let's all commit ourselves to the basic civility of minding our own business," she writes. This puts a reader in a tight spot: can I or can I not skip the chapter in "Bad Mother" wherein our author confides her regret over her breasts' lost buoyancy?

Lots of people find this kind of thing winsome, I guess, and I did like it when Lewis admitted to sneaking out during his wife's ten-hour labor to score Ring Dings from a hospital vending machine. But as long as we're trafficking in unsought revelation, reading these books made me think of nothing so much as traipsing to the playground with a twelve-month-old who merrily toddles off to the sandbox while I, despite hiding behind a newspaper and attempting to appear exactly as approachable as Napoleon Bonaparte, find myself cornered by a stranger: "You have a baby? *I* have a baby! Doesn't parenthood beat all?" I've been that stranger, too (I confess! I confess!), which must be why I'm such an easy mark; the sandbox, my Waterloo. I used to like that conversation. Lately, though, it's been getting old: all the mothers want forgiveness; all the fathers want applause. A few years back, in "Confessions of a Slacker Mom," Muffy Mead-Ferro admitted that during her pregnancy she did not actually buy a gizmo that was supposed to pipe Mozart into her belly; in "Dinner with Dad," Cameron Stracher offered an account of his valiant year of getting home in time for supper. Frankly, I'd just as soon stipulate that most baby gear is worthless, stupid junk and that eating dinner with your kids is really important. Then I'd like to get back to reading the paper. But, hey, sure, amnesty, ovation, whatever gets you through the long, sleepless night.

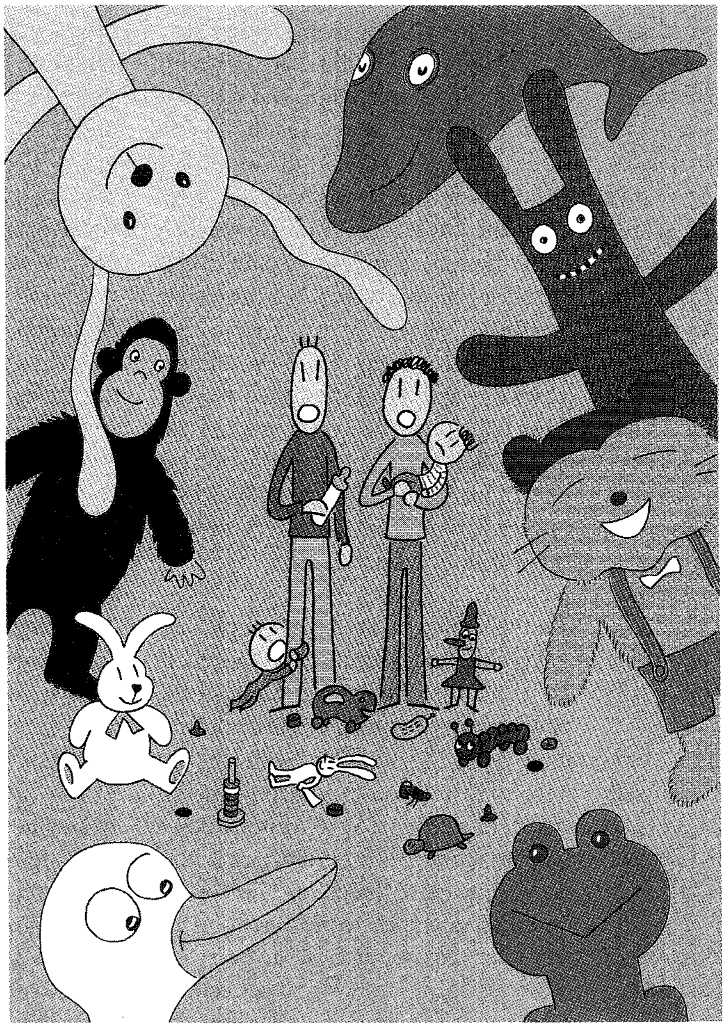
I blame, as I say, Clara Savage Littledale, whose job it was to help invent American parenthood. Stages of life are artifacts. Adolescence is a useful contrivance, midlife is a moving target, senior citizens are an interest group, and tweenhood is just plain made up. Parenthood seems, at first, different. There have always been parents, and parents have always been besotted with their children, awestruck by their impossible beauty, dopey high jinks, and strange little minds. But "parenthood," the word, dates only to the middle of the nineteenth century, and the notion that parenthood is a distinct stage of life, shared by men and women, is historically in its infancy. An ordinary life used to look something like this: born into a growing family, you help rear your siblings, have the first of your own half-dozen or even dozen children soon after you're grown, and die before your youngest has left home. In the early eighteen-hundreds, the fertility rate among American women was between seven and eight children; adults couldn't expect to live past sixty. To be an adult was to be a parent—nearly everyone lived in households with children—except that people didn't usually think of themselves as "parents"; they were mothers or fathers, and everyone knew that there was a world of difference between the two.

In Littledale's day, all that had begun to change. People were living longer, having fewer children, and starting families later in life. Littledale, who was born in 1891, didn't have a baby until she was thirty-one. By 1920, women bore, on average, just over three children. Child rearing no longer circumscribed every woman's life; motherhood and fatherhood, though not the same, had more in common than they used to. The slice of the population that consisted of adults who did not have children at home—people who would never have children, hadn't had them yet, or had already had them and now had an empty nest—was sizable, and growing. In 1880, seventy per cent of American adults lived in households with children under the age of fifteen; by 1920, that number had fallen to fifty-five per cent. All these changes, aggregated, made parenthood into something different, something big, something planned.

By 1922, when Littledale became a mother, parenting had also begun to look especially mystifying to the increasing numbers of people, generally wealthier people, who had not grown up caring for their siblings, neighbors, cousins, and nieces and nephews, and who, it turned out, had no idea how to bathe or dress or soothe a baby. Looking after babies and little kids is skilled labor, but, as the number of children dwindled, so did the number of adults who had any real skill. The growing uprootedness of American life meant that many first-time parents couldn't count on grandparents, or, really, on anyone. In stepped experts, who argued that taking care of children was not just a skill; it was a science. In the eighteen-nineties, the psychologist G. Stanley Hall established an American foothold for the academic discipline of child study (imported from Europe, along with kindergarten), just as pediatrics was becoming a specialty. The U.S. Children's Bureau was established in 1912. As Littledale explained in 1930, the year the American Academy of Pediatrics was founded:

> Once it was believed that the very physical fact of parenthood brought with it an instinctive wisdom that enabled one to rear children wisely and well. Parents knew best. Today fathers and mothers are unwilling to struggle under such a load of self-imposed omniscience. Even if they were, the facts would be against them. For in this country various studies made in the last ten years present incontrovertible data to prove that devoted but unenlightened parenthood is a dangerous factor in the lives of children.

This almost passes for a definition: parenthood is being so inept that you're a danger to your own children. That, at least, was the premise of Littledale's magazine, and its price.



Middle-class parents are an insecure, easily gulled consumer group.

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

Littledale was the editor, but *Parents' Magazine* was the brainchild of a philanthropist and publisher named George Joseph Hecht. Hecht, who was born in New York in 1895, had served in the government's office of public information during the First World War, where he helped found the Bureau of Cartoons. In 1919, he published an amazing collection, "The War in Cartoons"—a history of the war in a hundred cartoons—and, the following year, began publishing *Better Times*, "the Smallest Newspaper in the World." (It measured less than four by five inches.) For a while, Hecht wrote the entire paper, which was a weekly, and pretty good. Hecht liked to tell this story: In the early nineteen-twenties, while sailing back from a trip to Europe, he met a well-heeled woman who confided to him, "I have failed where every woman wants to succeed—as a mother." Moved, and curious, Hecht began reading child-rearing manuals. "They were all great big thick books," he noticed. He liked little books; he liked pictures. He began raising money for a magazine that would teach a de-skilled middle class how to be parents. (Hecht did not, at this point, have children.) For the editor, he wanted a woman, and required "that she be a college graduate, that she should have had an editorial position preferably with a woman's magazine, that she should be able to write if dire necessity ever required it of her, that she be married and that she should be a mother." In 1926, he hired Clara Savage Littledale.

Littledale, talented and driven, had written features for the New York *Times* while still a student at Smith; after graduating, she became only the second woman reporter to be hired by the *Evening Post*. But at the *Post*, as elsewhere, women were almost never allowed into the newsroom; she was named editor of the paper's woman's page. (Joseph Pulitzer had started a woman's page in 1886, in the New York *World*. Woman's pages lasted for about a century. In 1969, the Washington *Post* renamed its "For and About Women" page the Style section; other newspapers followed suit. Parenting blogs like the *Times'* Motherlode are basically a throwback.) In 1914, Savage left the *Post* to become press chairperson of the National American Woman Suffrage Association; and the next year she took a job as associate editor at *Good Housekeeping*, though she mainly reported on policy matters, from Washington. In 1918, she went to Europe, to cover the war. When peace came, Savage quit *Good Housekeeping*, stayed in Europe, and, in 1920, married a journalist named Harold Littledale; two years later, she gave birth to a daughter. In 1924, Littledale wrote a short, bitter piece for *The New Republic* about sharing a maternity room with a woman whose baby had been stillborn. We never learn the woman's name; Littledale calls her 41A. Weirdly, the story, much of which is conversation overheard during a visit from 41A's husband, has a lot in common with "Hills Like White Elephants," which Hemingway published in 1927, in "Men Without Women." The couple never mention the dead baby, but everything they say is about the dead baby:

> "Is my aunt cookin' your meals?" she asked.
>
> "Yep, and, say, we had a pie."
>
> "What kind of a pie?" the girl demanded fiercely.
>
> "Apple pie."
>
> "Did she use up those apples I was savin'?" The face of 41A was white and set.

With Littledale at the helm, the first issue of *Children, The Magazine for Parents* appeared in 1926 (a year after Harold Ross started *The New Yorker*). It was full of expert advice, offered by leading psychologists, doctors, educators, and scholars. There had been advice literature before, of course—not only great, thick books but also magazines, including *Babyhood* (1884-92) and *American Motherhood* (1903-19)—but Hecht and

Littledale came up with a formula for explaining the new science of parenting. "The staff sits up nights throwing scientific words out of the articles submitted by college professors," Littledale wrote. She also domesticated her experts. If the magazine "publishes an article by a Ph.D.," she wrote, "it hastens to explain that said Ph.D. has a baby or if the Ph.D. is a man that he is the uncle of a dear little tot." More important, Littledale solicited contributions from people who had no academic expertise—"Mammas and papas are encouraged to contribute articles and they do"—chiefly to point out what rank amateurs they were. In 1927, the year Littledale worked through her second pregnancy, she ran articles like "Can a Tired Business Man Be a Good Father?," an argument for what later came to be called "quality time" ("An hour can be made more significant than a day") and "Confessions of an Amateur Mother," the lament of a wealthy, well-educated woman who hasn't the slightest idea how to care for her newborn: "Why is it that for the women of my type—professional women—motherhood, as a rule, comes so hard?" (She complains, too, that she isn't eligible for social services; there are "motherhood clinics and baby stations aplenty in the districts of the 'poor' women: why not for me?")

Within two years of *Children's* first issue, Hecht and Littledale had changed the magazine's name, a decision that made a lot of sense, since all this business about parenthood, then as now, has very little to do with kids. By 1931, *Parents' Magazine* boasted two hundred thousand subscribers. Middle-class mothers and fathers turned out to be a very well-defined consumer group, easily gulled into buying almost anything that might remedy their parental deficiencies. In 1938, *Parents'* peddled a correspondence course: "Add Science to Love and Be a 'Perfect Mother.' " The magazine's success carried Littledale into broadcasting; she was heard on NBC radio beginning in 1932, where she administered advice by the anecdote. "A child needs two parents" was her answer to a letter from a listener who wished that he knew his children better. "I'm afraid I'm a failure as a mother," a woman fretted, and Littledale wisely counselled her, "One way to be a failure as a mother is to overplay the role." Littledale's advice was usually perfectly sensible. She didn't much like punishment; she thought kids needed to learn to do things for themselves. On more particular matters, such as how to handle a crying baby, Littledale's advice, like her magazine, followed parenting fashion, which changes with the hemlines. Urgent social issues that affected the way many Americans reared their children—segregation and poverty, for instance—had no place on Littledale's list of parenting problems. In 1946, the year Benjamin Spock published "Baby and Child Care," *Parents'* reached four hundred thousand subscribers; it came to be known as the Family Bible. Today, it claims fifteen million readers, nearly all of them women. The magazine lost its apostrophe somewhere along the way, as well as its purchase on American life, but confessions of amateur mothers—"*Parents* is for every woman who lives and parents in her own authentic way"—and a column called Fatherhood 101 can still be read at its Web site, parents.com, where you can also find out about a lot of worthless, stupid baby gear and learn that eating dinner with your kids is really important.

In the United States today, people raising children are, statistically, a minority. With the notable exception of the baby boom, the percentage of American adults living in households with children younger than fifteen has been falling for more than a century; by 1990, it was down to about a third. The fertility rate is now just slightly more than two. The average American can expect to live into his or her seventies; the population, as everyone knows, is aging, fast. Forty per cent of American babies born in 2006 were their mother's first. We are more inexperienced and unskilled at caring for them than ever, something Anne Lamott wrote about in her wry and smart memoir, "Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year." Small families make for few economies of scale; a father finally figures out how to swaddle his baby, and, damn it, the age of swaddling is over. A not uncommon experience is a mother who, upon first holding her newborn, realizes that it is the first baby she has ever held.

One of the stranger things about the success of a magazine whose premise was that parents are a danger to their own children is that, by the time Hecht began publishing *Parents'*, children were safer than ever. In 1850, more than one baby in every five died before its first year. By 1920, infant mortality in the United States had dropped to one in twenty. By the Second World War, accidents had replaced disease as the leading cause of childhood death. Today, infant mortality is at one in two hundred. Historians once assumed that when childhood mortality was high people must not have loved their children very much; it would have been too painful. Research has since proved that assumption wrong. Now that children are very likely to survive to adulthood, you might think parents wouldn't worry so much. This is wrong, too. We love even when that spells grief, and we worry even when that means worrying about nothing. Or, at least, that's the best explanation I've got for why I once bought one of those little mirrors you Velcro to the back seat of your car so that, when your baby has to ride facing backward, you can keep an eye on him. I could tell that story, I guess, but only two things about it are worth knowing: (1) those little mirrors, while in all other respects useless, make a pretty good ice-skating rink for Lego people and (2) it's more important to mind the road.

Meanwhile, the changes of the past two centuries have created actual problems, structural problems that affect everyone, not just the demographic that reads *Parents*, problems that can be very hard to see when you're driving while looking in a baby-view mirror. Most jobs are made for people who aren't taking care of children. The sharper the division between parenthood and adulthood, the worse those jobs fit, and the less well people who aren't rearing children understand the hardships of people who are. Employers are seldom asked to accommodate family life in any meaningful way; employees do all the accommodating, which mainly involves, especially for women, pretending that we don't actually have families. Everyone has a story about how painful that is. It's also crazy, and maddening, and unfair. We've all got stories to tell, but stories aren't going to rewrite employment law.

Neither are cute books about parenthood as an exclusive club whose initiation rites include confessions of ineptitude, though it's easy to see why people write them. The average age of a woman at the birth of her first child is now twenty-five, an all-time high, and the fastest-growing cohort of first-time mothers is women over thirty-five. Most Americans become parents only after having been fully grown for a goodish while, which means that we share an experience—a set piece in every parenting memoir—that can feel as if it binds us to one another and alienates us from everyone else, the experience of crossing a great divide between Life Before Children and Life, the Much Sloppier, Sweeter, and More Ridiculous 3-D Sequel. I love that sequel. I laugh! I cry! I also really like the part where I get to read the newspaper.

"I wasn't prepared for how ill suited and poorly trained I was for the job of full-time mother," Ayelet Waldman writes in "Bad Mother," unintentionally echoing "Confessions of an Amateur Mother," even though Waldman, a former public defender, is explicitly arguing against the idea that she, or any woman, needs Littledale-style parental education. As Waldman sees it, expert advice about how to be a "good mother" is the problem; a "bad mother" movement is her solution. (Hey, sure, absolution, three cheers, but I'm with Littledale here: don't overplay the role.) If only more mothers were willing to be more honest about how far we fall short of an ill-conceived ideal—June Cleaver is Waldman's straw woman—we'd all be better off. That's why Waldman confesses, and confesses, and confesses: she's taking a hit for the rest of us. Paid parental leave? Better day care? Nah. More *memoir* is what we need. Michael Lewis isn't trying to start a movement; mostly, he's trying to make fun of the new fatherhood. "This book is a snapshot of what I assume will one day be looked back upon as a kind of Dark Age of Fatherhood," he writes, archly. "Obviously, we're in the midst of some long unhappy transition between the model of fatherhood as practiced by my father and some ideal model, approved by all, to be practiced with ease by the perfect fathers of the future."

The thing is, we *are* in the midst of a long transition. But it's no happier for these books. You have a baby? *I* have a baby! Doesn't parenthood beat all? Well, yes, it does. But I still miss adulthood. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

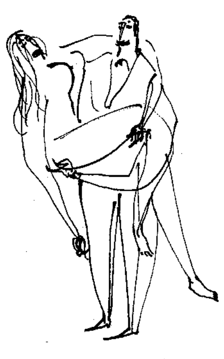
An audio interview with Jill Lepore.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Social Relations

Portfolios of the Poor, *by Daryl Collins, Jonathan Morduch, Stuart Rutherford, and Orlanda Ruthven (Princeton; $29.95).* Ten years ago, the authors of this unusual study began collecting detailed yearlong "financial diaries" from households in Bangladesh, India, and South Africa, with a focus on those living on less than two dollars a day per person. They found, to their surprise, that none of the families lived hand to mouth; even the poorest relied on complex combinations of financial strategies, including joining savings clubs, buying funeral insurance, and acting as "money guards" for neighbors. The diarists did things that might seem irrational—borrowing in order to save; paying interest on savings—but that made sense given their unpredictable incomes and limited options. While the authors do offer prescriptions for how to expand those options, it's their scrupulous attention to actual behavior that makes this book invaluable.

Slumming, *by Chad Heap (Chicago; $35).* Heap's enthralling history defines "slumming" broadly, to encompass the activities of Victorian social reformers, who enjoyed dropping in on immigrant households, and the "Negro vogue" and "pansy and lesbian craze" of the nineteen-thirties. He concentrates on Chicago and New York, where anti-vice committees documented salaciousness from the red-light districts of the Lower East Side to the "bohemian thrill-age" of the Village and the cross-dressing "sex morons" farther north. His evidence suggests that immigrants, bohemians, blacks, and gays provided the city's best live entertainment; according to Heap, they also provided a backdrop of degradation against which whiteness and heterosexuality defined themselves. The racial, social, and sexual implications of each slumming fad, "from the best intentioned to the most horrifyingly exploitative," are assiduously parsed, perhaps to mitigate the inherent titillation of the material.



Nice Work If You Can Get It, *by Andrew Ross (N.Y.U.; $27.95).* According to Ross, job insecurity became commonplace long before the current financial debacle. As economies shifted from industry to information, the benefits and securities of the Keynesian era quietly gave way to a workforce of temps, freelancers, adjuncts, and migrants. Ross finds that city fathers are more interested in Olympic bids and stadium projects than in sustainable employment, while corporations spend more on "social responsibility" public-relations campaigns than on addressing worker complaints, and activists are too focussed on narrow concerns to find common cause with natural allies. Given the urgency of the subject, it's a pity that Ross didn't give more space to European developments, such as the colorful "precarity" protest movement and the discussion of policies that could extend labor rights to all workers.

The Woman Behind the New Deal, *by Kirstin Downey (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $35).* Frances Perkins, F.D.R.'s Secretary of Labor, and the first female member of a Presidential cabinet, was a key architect of the New Deal, guiding F.D.R. to enact some of his most lasting labor legislation—Social Security, unemployment compensation, minimum wage, child labor laws, and the forty-hour workweek. Downey's biography traces Perkins's career from its beginnings (volunteer work with Jane Addams's Hull House) and vividly conveys her subject's determination and political savvy. Perkins faced many difficulties: the arrival of the Second World War shut her out of the President's inner circle; she supported a mentally ill husband and had trouble balancing work and family life. In addition, her contribution to American history has often been overshadowed by the criticism she drew as a woman in power.

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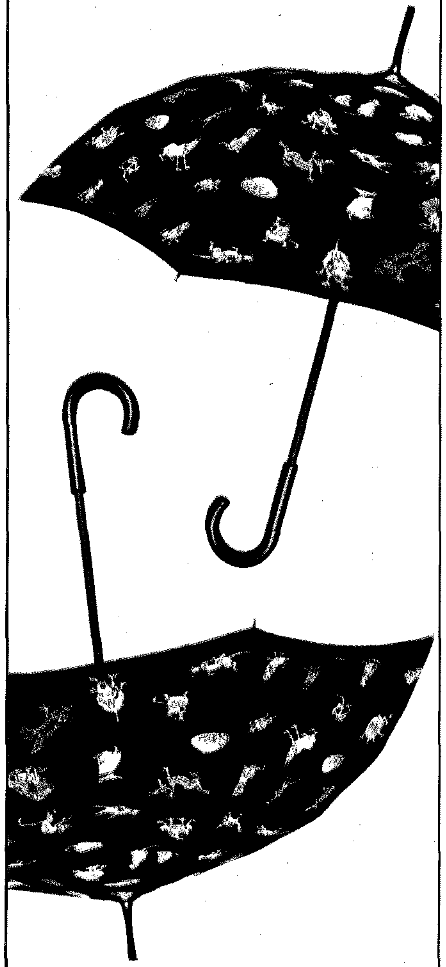

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THE ART WORLD

A WOMAN'S WORK

The brief career of Judith Leyster.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

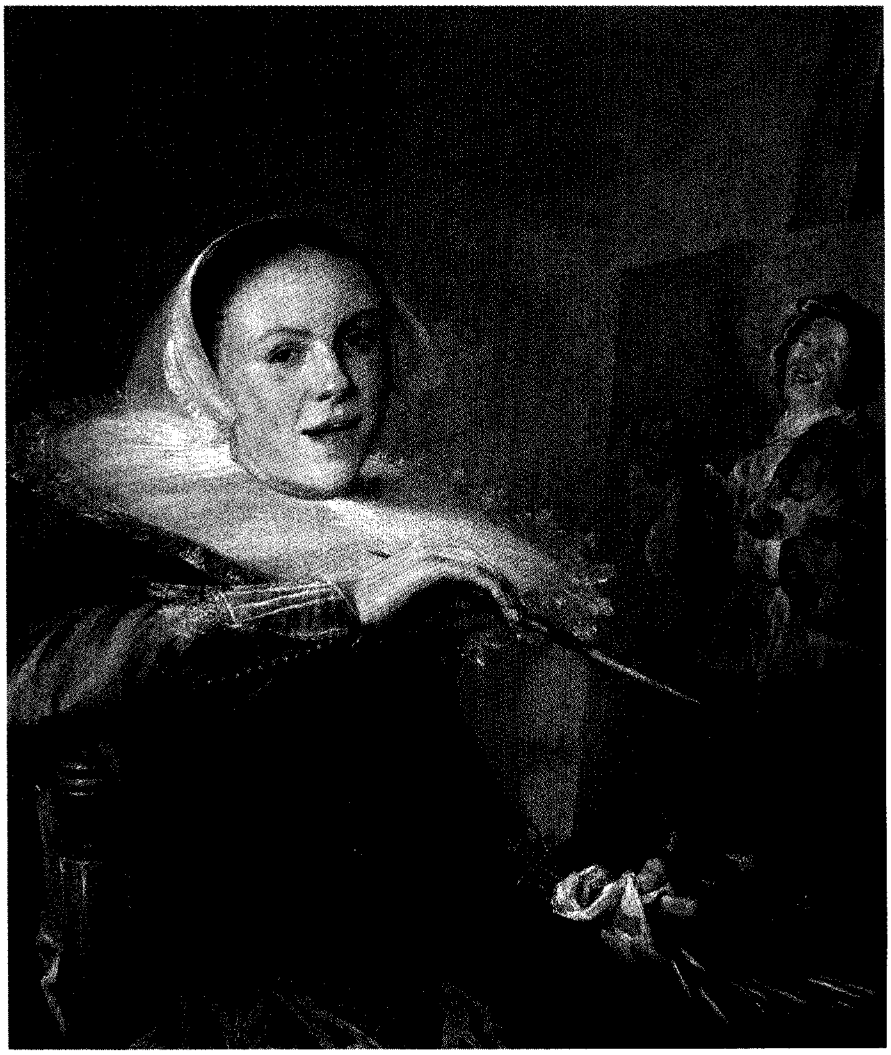
A show at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C., of the seventeenth-century Dutch painter Judith Leyster (1609-60) would have been a political gesture had it been held thirty or so years ago. Now, in celebration of the artist's four-hundredth birthday, it's just a highly dramatic pleasure. Leyster's genre pictures, from a fleetingly brief career in her native Haarlem, are among the slim pickings of important Western fine art by women prior to the nineteenth century. Feminist critics and scholars—fired by a famous 1971 essay by the art historian Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"—seized on Leyster as a heroine perhaps second only to the terrific Italian Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1652). Leyster was an apt candidate on biographical as well as on aesthetic grounds, illustrating the tall odds against women in art worlds of yore. Her story, like Gentileschi's, features a legal case won to meagre satisfaction. Gentileschi was raped by a painter when she was eighteen, and, after she had been tortured to prove that she was telling the truth, he was convicted. Then he was let go. Mild in comparison, but galling nonetheless, was Leyster's complaint to the painters' guild of Haarlem (she was one of only two women granted membership in the entire seventeenth century) against her possible teacher Frans Hals, the city's lion of painting, for stealing an assistant. Hals paid a small fine but kept the assistant. That was in 1635. A year later, at the age of twenty-six, Leyster married Jan Miense Molenaer, a successful but starkly inferior artist, and plunged into childbearing and family affairs. The little that remains of what she created thereafter lacks her previous, blazing originality. I knew Leyster was good, but the Washington show surprised me with its suggestions of the formation of a great artist. It left me indignant on her behalf.

She was the eighth child of a brewer and cloth-maker who took the family name from that of an eminent house he bought in Haarlem, in 1601. (In Dutch, *leyster* means "lodestar.") In 1628, he went bankrupt. The family moved to the vicinity of Utrecht, where, on the evidence of her paintings, Leyster was exposed to the work of major artists, notably Hendrick ter Brugghen, who had adopted the revolutionary light and shadow of Caravaggio. She was soon back in Haarlem as a tyro entrepreneur, like nearly all the artists of Holland's capitalism-pioneering Golden Age. Whether or not she studied under Hals, she speedily absorbed his innovative style—drawing with paint, essentially—while integrating lessons from the Utrecht Caravaggisti. The show begins with "Serenade" (1629), done when she was twenty. It's an astonishing portrait of a fancily dressed lute player, rendered swiftly in raking, sonorous light. Leyster obliged the going market for scenes of tavern jollity—a specialty of Hals, who begs to be termed the master of the Golden Age's happy hour. (Leyster was forgotten after her death until 1892, when it was discovered that the curious monogram on a painting of drinkers—"The Happy Couple," from 1630—thought to be by Hals, was Leyster's: a large "J," a small "l," and a star.) Her adherence to a hedonistic ethos can feel forced, against the grain of her nascent temperament. The slaphappy topers in "Merry Company" (circa 1630-31) are too merry by half, to my mind. More persuasive is the bite of the contemporaneous "The Last Drop," in which two carousers are attended by a ferociously gleeful skeleton that cradles a lighted candle and a skull in one hand and holds an hourglass aloft with the other. But all such voguish themes strike me as baby fat on a sensibility in which sterner, more complex qualities were struggling to mature.

Three works riveted my attention in this small show, which has been beautifully installed by the curator of Northern Baroque painting, Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. Supporting exhibits include paintings by Hals and by Molenaer—whose irritating wedding picture "The Duet" (circa 1635-36) virtually displays Leyster as one item in an array of his possessions, along with a sleek dog and a luxuriantly set dinner table—and musical instruments akin to those she often depicted.

"Self-Portrait" (circa 1632-33) finds Leyster, dressed to the nines in a gown with sleeves of purple silk and a lace-trimmed linen collar, wielding brushes and palette at her easel. A not quite pretty but vibrant young woman, she turns toward the viewer, smiling and appearing to speak. On the canvas before her is a fiddler copied from "Merry Company," advertising her genre specialty. The brush in her right hand points at the man's crotch—a bawdy nuance, and to the taste of the time. X-rays have revealed that Leyster first pictured a portrait of a girl, probably herself. The literal self-effacement tells a melancholy tale, but the painting is a joy and, retroactively, a feminist icon. Owned by the National Gallery, it is frequently requested for loan. Even better is one of Leyster's last surviving works, her masterpiece, "Young Flute Player" (circa 1635). A seated boy in a red hat and a ruff collar plays a flute while gazing, sidelong, into the source of the picture's streaming, tender daylight. A violin and a recorder hang on the wall behind his chair. The work's finely modulated browns and grays are breathtaking. They affect like essences of the flute's sound—you practically hear them. Contemplating that work, I hankered for another dozen that would extend and develop its angelic style. But there's just the one.

"The Proposition" (1631) is inexhaustibly interesting and disturbing. A ruddy, leering satyr of a man leans on a table beside a woman who is intently sewing, and offers her a handful of coins. He wears an un-Dutch fur hat, indicating that he is a foreigner and just in from the street. She wears a dazzling white smock over a voluminous blue-green skirt and rests her feet on a warming device, in which embers glow. (It's a cold night in Haarlem.) The composition is oddly shoved to the left of the canvas, leaving empty space in which indefinite, almost Edvard Munch-like shadows lurk; it centers on a flaring oil lamp. She stolidly ignores the man, though one of his hands is draped on her right arm and the other, with the coins, is inches from her toiling fingers. Her intelligent face is painted with a crystalline precision that subtly cracks the convention of the picture's then common genre, in which women were usually shown as more than receptive to temptation. The art historian Frima Fox Hofrichter, writing in the show's brochure, notes that "to sew" was, as it remains, Dutch slang for sex, giving an unmistakable spin to an offer of money for a woman's sewing. So the woman's stony reluctance contests not only a powerful, socially superior man but the proverbial character of her situation. Indeed, the painting's very style, sensuously brushed and robustly colored in a fashionable vein, sides with the likes of the lecher against those of his prey. The consequent emotional tension is like that of an anxiety dream from which you try to awake but cannot.



Leyster's "Self-Portrait" (circa 1632-33): retroactively, a feminist icon.

COURTESY NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON

I can't decide whether Leyster feels contemporary or makes me feel Old Dutch. In her work, social and sexual anxieties tingle with fire-alarm immediacy. Plainly, she had what it took to cope with those stresses in imagination and, knitting the bravura of Hals to an anticipation of the pregnant stillness of a Vermeer, to turn them to artistic account. Dutch genius of the seventeenth century found successive, disparate balance points in an engulfing tumult of worldly change. Leyster verged on one of her own. But the life it would have required, that of an independent woman, was unsustainable. In our last glimpse of her, she plays a dainty cittern in her husband's "The Duet." He, with a huge lute, is proudly ebullient. Her face is a mask of banal contentment. The boldly creative young artist, ripe with promise, has disappeared. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

An audio slide show about Judith Leyster.

THE THEATRE

DOMESTIC POLITICS

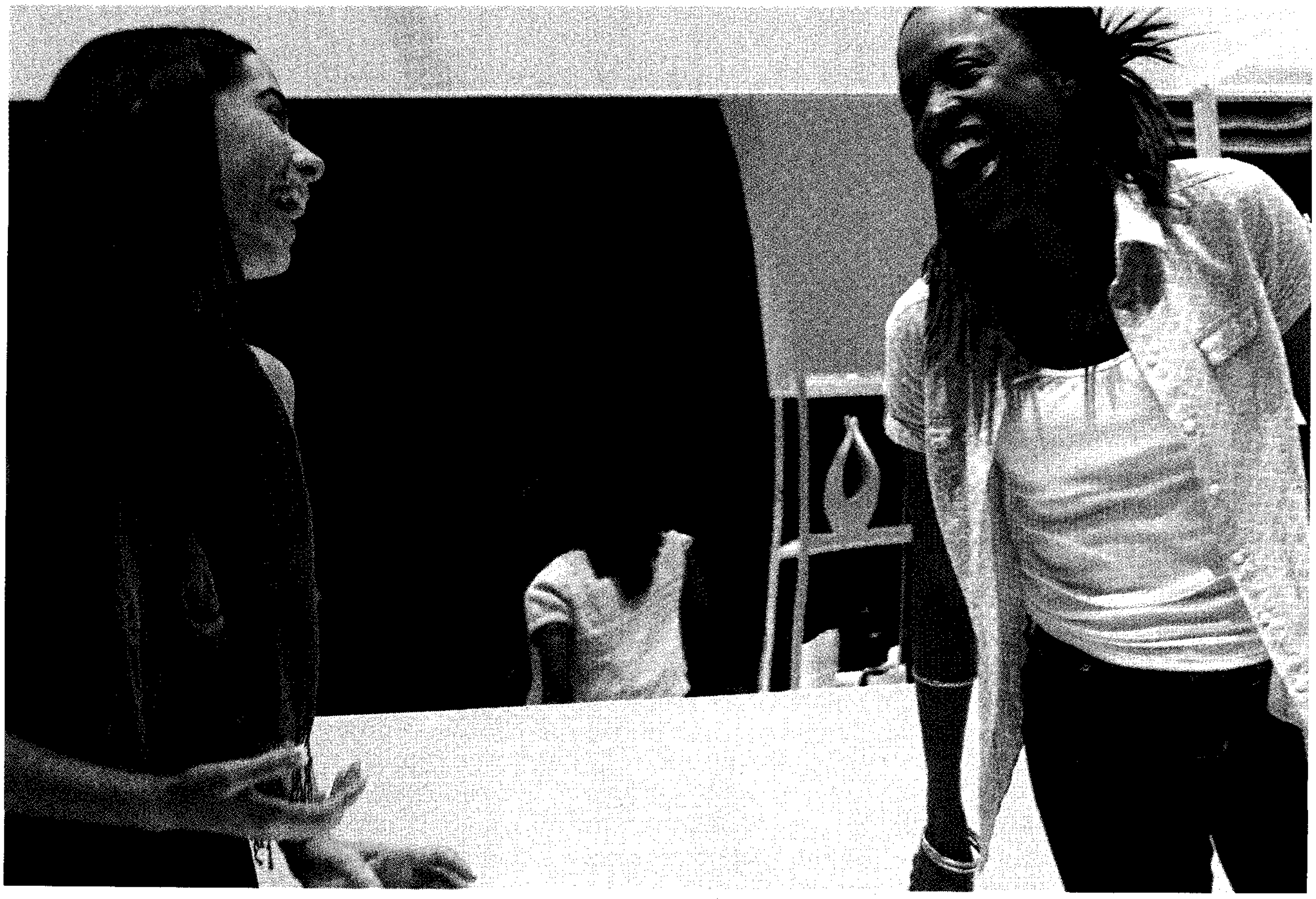
David Adjmi on household race relations.

BY HILTON ALS

There is so much going on in David Adjmi's play "Stunning" (at the Duke on 42nd Street, under the direction of Anne Kauffman) that it's impossible to dismiss it outright or to lavish praise on it. Either way, the spine of the play would likely crack if the weight of too much interpretation were applied to it. "Stunning" is a kind of ideological sitting duck—a work that could get its author labelled as either an important new voice in the American theatre or a trendy theorist in playwright's clothing.

Set in the close-knit Syrian Jewish community in the Midwood section of Brooklyn—where the thirty-six-year-old Adjmi grew up and attended the local yeshiva—"Stunning" focusses on Lily Schwecky (Cristin Milioti), a sixteen-year-old Syrian Jewish girl with long dark hair, round, doll-like eyes, and an alternately nervous and openmouthed demeanor. Lily has been married off into a life of consumerist luxury with a brutish, sexed-up older husband, Ike (Danny Mastrogiorgio). In the opening scene, she plays cards and trades barbs with her older sister, Shelly (Jeanine Serralles), and their friend Claudine (Sas Goldberg). As the conversation rattles along ("We have to wait for Tuni." "Tuni's not coming. She's getting a divorce"), the actresses punctuate their exchanges by chewing gum almost militaristically and flashing their bangles—a gesture that reminds one of the cartoonish theatrics of the women in Tennessee Williams's 1958 one-act, "A Perfect Analysis Given by a Parrot." (Adjmi is clearly attracted to Williams's brand of high style.) Eventually, we learn that Lily has just got back from a trip to Aruba, where, as Claudine points out, her skin turned black. Luckily, the blackness is only temporary—and to prove this Lily periodically peels strips of dead skin off her thin arms to reveal the whiteness underneath.

The Schwecky home is white, white, white: white furniture, white walls, which someone always seems to be repainting. And it doesn't occur to the Schweckys that they might be anything other than white until Blanche Nesbitt (Charlayne Woodard) appears, responding to an ad for a maid. A black gay feminist intellectual trying to escape her past, Blanche is the least convincing of Adjmi's characters, which is surprising, given that she is Adjmi's de-facto self-portrait. Like many artists, Adjmi felt like something of an outsider in his own community. "I felt Other within this Other," he said in a recent interview in *Time Out New York*. He went on, "I felt my sense of alterity very excruciatingly. I'm a gay, eccentric, arty person. In the world in general, I feel weird. But in this community—which has a very specific set of codes, values, and structure—I felt



Milioti and Woodard as a Syrian Jew and her black housemaid in "Stunning." Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

suffocated." Like her creator, Blanche uses her share of academic jargon. She likes to quote Roland Barthes and talk about "political truncheon" and "Kant's epistemological turn." She bases her sense of her self, in large part, on her success as a student of semiotics, and she uses her literary-theory credentials as a kind of come-on. "I studied representations of the African-American Domestic in Mass Media," she tells Lily. Still, Blanche does have some sense of humor about her past. After all, she is now an African-American Domestic in a World Defined by the Mass Hysteria of the Female Characters Around Her. In this setting, she is the voice of hyper-articulate oppression; she is also the voice of seduction. It's entertaining to watch Adjmi equate intellectualism with sexiness, but occasionally he slips too far into the dry groves of academe, substituting theory for character. Blanche feels less than real most of the time. (Of course, her name means "white" or "blank," so her emptiness may be intentional.) Nevertheless, Woodard—a wonderful, long-limbed actress—manages to find a number of colors in her character. (Pay attention to her expressions during Blanche's interview with Lily, for instance.)

The baby of the family, Lily is innocent and unquestioning, and Shelly is happy to keep it that way: she likes being the sharp-eyed elder. Lily internalizes everything that her older sister says, including the hateful dictum "Niggers steal," which Shelly spouts in non-kosher pig Latin in front of Blanche, after Lily has hired her—despite the fact that she would have preferred a Puerto Rican maid. Perhaps Lily likes Puerto Ricans because they look more like her. Who knows? There's so much doubling and playing on ethnic identity in "Stunning" that watching the play feels, at times, like overdosing on George Herriman's "Krazy Kat," with its surfeit of Yiddish and American black locutions. The melding and exchanging of identities is most successful among the three Syrian Jewish women. This is where Adjmi's real strength lies: he understands the clannish behavior of women—the rivalries, the bullying, the identification, the rejection, and the bonding that goes on among them.

It's when he tries to insert Blanche into the mix that the emotional energy of the play flags, not least because, through her, Adjmi tries to make a case for his own difference. As soon as Blanche is hired, she starts enlightening her new employer on her own ethnicity:

> LILY: We're Jewish.
> BLANCHE: You don't look Jewish.
> LILY: How do I look?
> BLANCHE: Middle Eastern.
> LILY (*offended*): Middle Eastin!!??
> BLANCHE: You have Middle Eastern features. You know Dark Features?
> LILY (*squinting in disbelief*): I'm tan? I went to Aruba?
> BLANCHE: Not your complexion, your features.
> LILY: I look white.
> BLANCHE: Not to me.
> LILY (*indignant*): What do you mean not to you, look at me.
> BLANCHE: I'm lookin.
> (*A brief staring contest.*)
> LILY (*sheepish*): Well my family they are . . . I think from . . . the Middle East.

Lily's response to Blanche's confrontations is to fall in love; Blanche offers a far sexier version of oppression than Ike's. But because we know so little about Blanche's inner life we remain detached from the relationship between the women. Like most sociopaths, Blanche is boring. When things in her life reach a crisis point, thanks to Ike—who goes after her with the same energy that Stanley Kowalski put to destroying another Blanche—we feel about as much as we would while sitting through a lecture on Claude Lévi-Strauss's "The Origin of Table Manners."

Adjmi is not alone in his failure to lift his black woman character above the stereotypes. It's a complex cultural problem that has for decades plagued the white intellectuals who have tried to write about race. A few have managed it: Bernard Malamud's profound stories of the fifties and sixties vividly express the tangle of fear, attraction, and hurt that existed between urban blacks and Jews of his generation. But Adjmi, in the end, buries Blanche in folklore: a safe, albeit racist move, and one that limits him as an artist—an artist whose next project I nevertheless can't wait to see. After all, Malamud had to learn to free himself, too. And he did this by understanding himself, the better to understand the inner lives of his characters. In his 1963 story "Black Is My Favorite Color," for instance, the Jewish protagonist is trapped in a prison of his desire for, among other things, black women—those others who both are and are not a version of himself. "If there's a ghetto," Malamud's philosophical schlub admits, "I'm the one that's in it." ♦

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ANXIETY TESTS

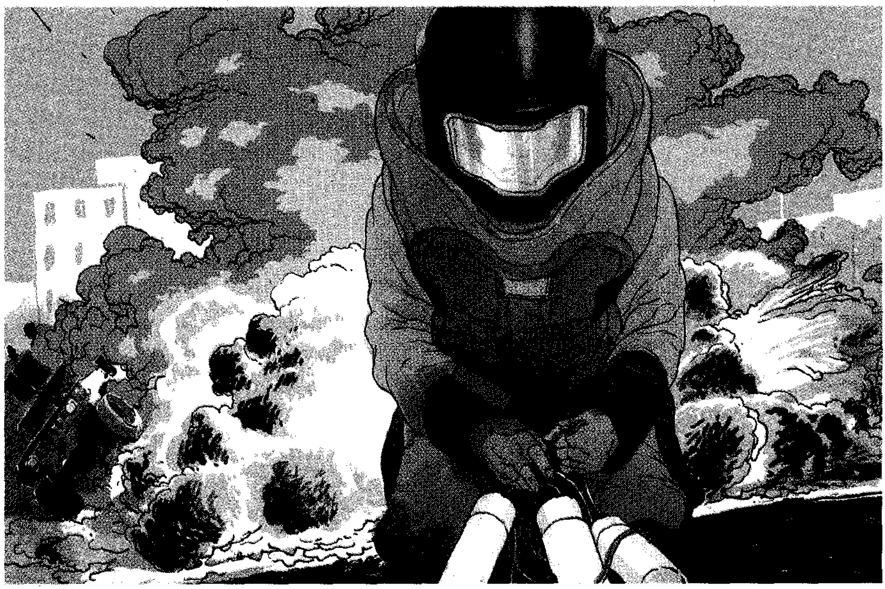
"The Hurt Locker" and "Food, Inc."

BY DAVID DENBY

The Iraq war has been dramatized on film many times, and those films have been ignored just as many times by theatre audiences. But Kathryn Bigelow's "The Hurt Locker" is the most skillful and emotionally involving picture yet made about the conflict. The film, from a script by Mark Boal, has a new subject: the heroism of the men who defuse improvised explosive devices, sloppily made but lethal bombs planted under a bag or a pile of garbage or just beneath the dirt of a Baghdad street. Bigelow stages one prolonged and sinister shoot-out in the desert, but the movie couldn't be called a combat film, nor is it political, except by implication—a mutual distrust between American occupiers and Iraqi citizens is there in every scene. The specialized nature of the subject is part of what makes it so powerful, and perhaps American audiences worn out by the mixed emotions of frustration and repugnance inspired by the war can enjoy this film without ambivalence or guilt. "The Hurt Locker" narrows the war to the existential confrontation of man and deadly threat.

Over and over, Staff Sergeant William James (Jeremy Renner), following a tipoff, walks to a bomb site in a heavy protective suit and tries to figure out how to pull apart clumsily tangled wires and flimsy triggering devices. We've seen James's predecessor die on the job: a man watching him from a nearby store detonated the bomb with a cell phone. As James goes in, slowly, under a hot sun, treading like a spaceman through trash-filled streets, people gather in doorways or look out windows. Which of them is hostile, which friendly, which merely curious? The two other members of James's team, the frightened young Eldridge (Brian Geraghty) and the wary, experienced Sanborn (Anthony Mackie), cover James, screaming at anyone who moves. The two men feel entirely vulnerable; they both admire and detest James, who pulls them into situations they would rather leave to someone else.

In the past, Kathryn Bigelow, now fifty-seven, has outdone the macho movie boys at their own game. In her "Blue Steel" (1989), as Jamie Lee Curtis, playing a cop, geared up for a day's work, Bigelow focussed on her revolver, her leather holster, and her shoes, in gleaming closeup. The sequence hovered somewhere between fetish and parody. Bigelow went into the ocean with Patrick Swayze and Keanu Reeves in the surfer-crime movie "Point Break" (1991), and brought off scenes of languorously slo-mo destruction in the cultish sci-fi crime movie "Strange Days" (1995). By the mid-nineties, I had her figured as a violence junkie with a strong tendency to stylize everything into stunning images that didn't always mean much. As a filmmaker, Bigelow is still obsessed with violence, but she's become a master at staging it. In "The Hurt Locker," there are no wasted shots or merely beautiful images. As Eldridge and Sanborn jerk their guns this way and that at a bomb scene, Bigelow, working with the great cinematographer Barry Ackroyd, jerks the camera around, too. She wants us to *be* there, to feel the danger, the mystery.



Jeremy Renner in Kathryn Bigelow's movie about a bomb-disposal squad in Iraq.

FRANK STOCKTON

This kind of immediacy is commonplace in action filmmaking, but, unlike so many directors today, who jam together crashes, explosions, and people sailing through the air in nonsensical montages of fantasy movement, Bigelow keeps the space tight and coherent. No matter how many times she cuts away, you know exactly where James is in relation to a bomb—whether he's in the kill zone or far enough away to be safe. (You can't break up the integrity of space when space is the subject of your movie.) And Bigelow prolongs the moment, stretching out our anxiety almost to the point at which it becomes pain. "The Hurt Locker" is quite a feat: in this period of antic fragmentation, Bigelow has restored the wholeness of time and space as essentials for action. Occasionally, a plaintive reader writes me a note after I've panned some violent fantasy movie and says something like "Some of us *like* explosions. Ease up." Well, I like *these* explosions, because I believe in them. Realism has its thrills, too.

The insistence on plainness, the absence of stylization, carries over to the performances as well. Jeremy Renner has played the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer and many minor roles in action movies. He has a round face, with a beautiful smile that he mostly keeps hidden, and a strong but unglamorous body. Bigelow's idea in casting him, I think, was to make her star a competent but physically ordinary American serviceman whose greatest gifts are within. William James, it turns out, is implacably heroic. He never steps away from danger. You might say that he's drawn to it and needs it, but he never makes a fuss about what he's doing. His charisma consists of having no obvious charisma except phenomenal concentration and guts. And since he knows, handling bombs, when to be cautious and when not to be, he can be hair-raisingly casual, tossing aside a disabled device as if it were an empty juice carton. At one point, he shucks his headset, too, and Sanborn, who needs to stay in touch with what James is doing, is so enraged that he slugs him. In the nineteen-fifties, Aldo Ray played men like William James—war lovers, completely at home on the battlefield but hapless in the normal relations of life. (When James and his partners relax and get drunk, the only way they can show their affection is to punch one another in the stomach.) But Ray's military men were unreachable, stone-cold killers, while James has strong emotions, which he keeps pent up.

Bigelow and Mark Boal (the journalist who developed the real-life material that served as the basis of Paul Haggis's "In the Valley of Elah") don't always let us know exactly what's going on. As the soldiers swing into action, the filmmakers want a sense of strangeness and disorientation, a craziness that's on the verge of taking over the moment. As James is walking toward a bomb, an Iraqi drives into the scene in a taxi and won't obey commands to go back. What is he up to? Another man, strapped with explosives, changes his mind about suicide and tearfully begs James to rescue him. Is he a lure? The anguish of uncertainty is part of the men's daily life, and James himself, so sure in his odd profession, gets into a serious mixup over a friendly Iraqi boy who he thinks has been murdered by insurgents. Suddenly, he loses his bearings and charges around Baghdad like a madman. "The Hurt Locker" is a small classic of tension, bravery, and fear, which will be studied twenty years from now when people want to understand something of what happened to American soldiers in Iraq. If there are moviegoers who are exhausted by the current fashion for relentless fantasy violence, this is the convincingly blunt and forceful movie for them.

Those of us who avoid junk food, with many sighs of relief and self-approval, may still be eating junk a good deal of the time. This enraging fact, which will not surprise anyone who has read such muckraking books as Eric Schlosser's "Fast Food Nation" (2001) and Michael Pollan's "The Omnivore's Dilemma" (2006), is one of the discomforting meanings of the powerful new documentary "Food, Inc.," an angry blast of disgust aimed at the American food industry. The introduction of corn as a cheap (heavily subsidized) universal feed, for chickens, for cows, even for fish, not to mention the corn products seeping into candy, soft drinks, cheese, and everything else but (if we're lucky) capers and olives, has, in the past thirty years or so, made that particular package of starch nearly inescapable. Unless we search out, at considerable expense, organic free-range poultry and grass-fed meat, we're eating corn when we eat a chicken or a steak dinner. We're eating corn when we drink a Coke. The seemingly vast array of foods in a typical supermarket is not so varied as we might think; much of it is produced or controlled by a few enormous food companies that have operated without serious government regulation in recent years. We didn't always eat as badly as we do now.

The director of "Food, Inc.," Robert Kenner, has many outrageous things to tell us about industrial food, but the picture is perhaps most upsetting when we get a glimpse (largely from footage shot surreptitiously by workers) of the way poultry and livestock are raised. Chickens are mainly kept in long, dark, stifling sheds, where they stand in their own waste, and are fatted with corn to the slaughter point in a mere forty-nine days. Beef cattle are jammed together in enormous pens, many of them sick from feed that violates a digestive system built for grass. Their illness can become our illness. Both Schlosser and Pollan—measured, factual, and devastating—appear in the film, laying out the broad outlines of the food system, and we see some of its victims, most memorably a poor Latino family that admits, with resigned sorrow, that it can afford to fill up on fast-food burgers but not on fresh vegetables. For many of this movie's likely viewers, the sting built into "Food, Inc." is the realization that, without unending effort, they are not all that much freer in their choices than that hard-pressed family. ♦

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The Front Row, a blog about movies.

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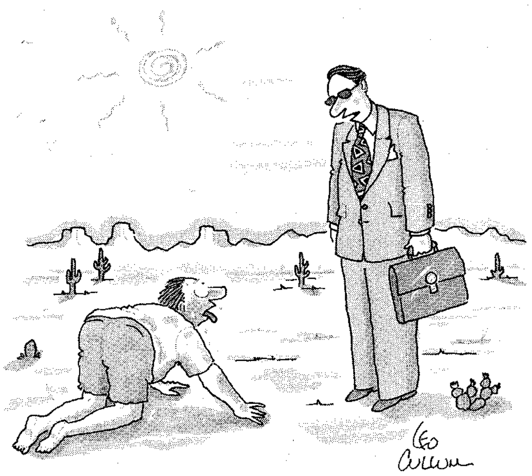
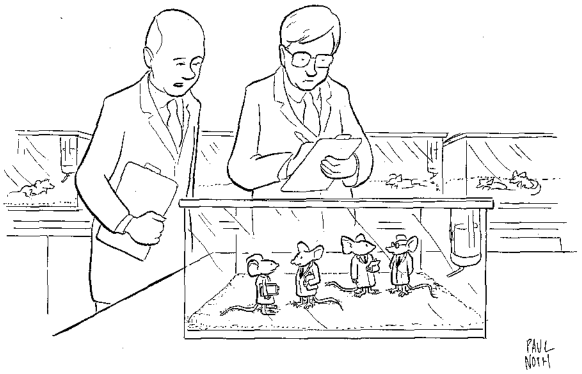
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, June 28th. Finalists in the June 8th & 15th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 20th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the U.S. or Canada (except Quebec) age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"First, we discuss my percentage of any water you find, real or imagined."
Jeff Joseph, Melville, N.Y.



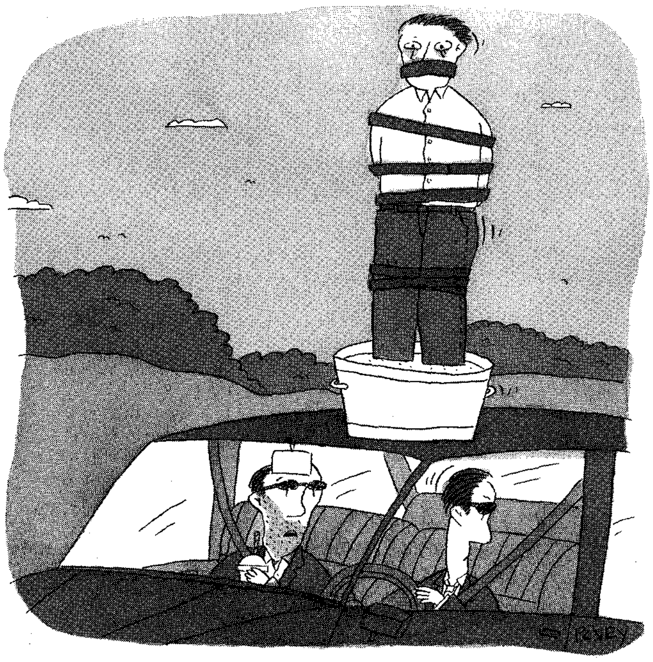
THE FINALISTS

"O.K., let's slowly lower in the grant money."
Todd Bearson, Arlington, Mass.

"Relax, for them it's publish and *perish."*
David Burns, Needham, Mass.

"The research is conclusive—mice are even cuter when you dress them up in little coats."
Brad Hodges, Dungannon, Ontario

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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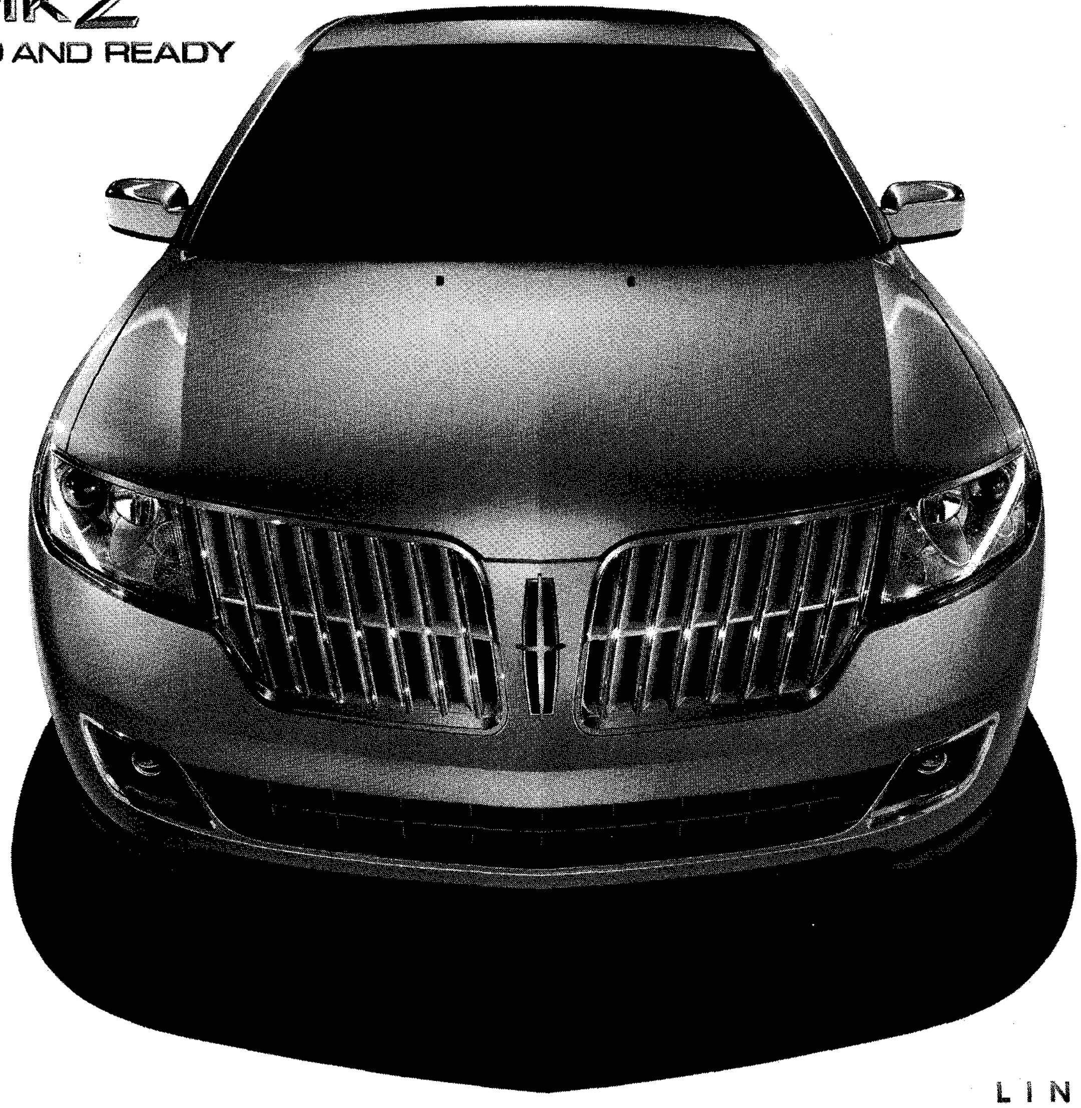

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not off you.

Introducing Ally. A bank that believes banking took a wrong turn somewhere with fees and penalties. A bank that believes in a quaint concept: it's your money, not ours. That's why we offer rates that are consistently among the best, we never hide behind fine print and we give you 24/7 access to a real human. Why? It's just the right thing to do.

ally℠

Straightforward.